

Healing Through Spiritual Understanding

Workbook for level 5 of the Healing Journey

HJ 5A: “A New Earth” by Eckhart Tolle

HJ 5B: “A Course in Miracles”

Alastair J Cunningham, O.C., Ph.D., C.Psych.

Healing Through Spiritual Understanding

Workbook for Level 5 of the Healing Journey

INTRODUCTION

Self healing is about answering the question “Who or what am I?” at deeper and deeper levels. It is the process of finding our identity in relation to other people, the world, and ultimately to our spiritual ground, so that we can become our ‘true selves’, in harmony with all around us. It is a life-long quest, seldom completed, but a path along which even a little progress can make an enormous difference to mental and physical health.

Table 1 (at the end of this introduction) shows the understanding that we hope to reach at the different levels of the Healing Journey program. Levels 1 and 2 are devoted to finding out what our minds can do to improve our quality of life, our experience. We learn some basic techniques: relaxation, imaging, thought watching and changing, goal setting, journaling, consulting an ‘Inner Healer’, and we introduce meditation. Level 3 increases the intensity of the work by inviting participants to examine and diminish some of the major blocks to mental harmony and spiritual experience, notably our tendency to judge others and ourselves, to feel guilty, and to project this guilt. At this level we also introduce ideas about God/the Divine, and pursue meditation further. Level 4 consolidates this learning: it is a brief self-study course, building on the foregoing levels, and aimed at strengthening those attributes of ourselves that have been shown in research studies (by our group and others) to promote longevity in people with serious cancers. We have described these attitudes as authenticity, autonomy and acceptance, meaning the ability to define and pursue what is important and fulfilling in life, without self-criticism, and the acceptance and peace that comes with this.

The rationale and practices of these first 4 levels all remain largely within the boundaries of conventional psychology, except for a greater than usual emphasis on the spiritual dimension. The benefits of their approach are well documented by research and clinical experience. Level 5, however, goes beyond the conventional. It is for those willing to pursue healing to its ultimate degree, and to ask “Who or what am I?” in a spiritual sense. It aims to bring us to awareness of our essential spiritual being, and to move us away from our usual sense of being only a material body, separate from everything else. The various wisdom traditions or spiritual systems (and all major religions have this mystical side) offer a variety of ways to help people ‘find themselves’. We discussed this briefly in level 3: major routes are through devotion (to the Divine), selfless service, meditation, and understanding. The first two are largely unfamiliar to most westerners. Meditation is becoming more accepted, and can take practitioners to a realization of their true self as thinking drops away. However, this requires an intensity of practice and time (many years) that very few can devote to it. I therefore prefer to

see meditation as one of a number of techniques that people can use for healing, and to emphasise as a central approach, the acquiring of understanding about the self. Learning to understand our true nature uses the part of ourselves that is most highly developed, our reasoning faculties, and can lead to rapid progress.

What does it mean, to 'learn to understand our true nature?' Don't we know it already? Are we not bodies, with a brain-dependent mind, existing in a world of solid material objects governed by physical laws? That of course is the conventional view, although 100 years of research in physics have shown us that our usual ideas of physical 'reality' are incorrect. To the mystics, too, the common view has always been erroneous, and a barrier to knowing who we truly are. Through their various practices, these men and women have, throughout history and in many cultures, arrived at a totally different view: that we are not material but ultimately spiritual beings, all connected or all One, immortal, invulnerable, experiencing only joy and love, but engaged in some kind of apparent shadow-play on this Earth, where pain and suffering are the predominant experience. Perhaps most of us have had an instant or two, maybe more, of experience of this, of the 'scales dropping from our eyes', and sensing our oneness or wholeness for a while, then unfortunately falling back into the painful mundane way that constitutes our ordinary being. To experience this oneness is to heal; it heals mentally, and almost certainly makes physical healing more likely (although scientific data on this is lacking). Level 5 addresses the lofty, and one could say sacred, task of helping people with serious disease to move towards this kind of spiritual experience as their regular way of being. This may promote physical healing, but whether or not it does so, the state of the body will come to seem much less important, and the death of the body will no longer be seen as 'the end'.

Table 1: Healing as a progressive, stepwise process - understanding reached through the 5 Levels of the Healing Journey.

Level of HJ course	Understanding reached after this level	Main Ideas and techniques learned at this level
Before course	My health and fate are determined by circumstances outside my control	Little is learned without deliberate study and practice.
1	I can exert some control over my healing	Basic self help techniques: body awareness, awareness of thought-stream and imagery
2	I create my own experience, and can influence my health substantially.	Meditation, imaging, journaling, setting goals and consulting inner wisdom. Taking deliberate control of my life
3	I have set up, and can dismantle 'blocks' to the experience of my authentic self, including judgment, projection, and guilt.	Awareness of blocks to 'authenticity' and spiritual connection, and diminishing these.
4	I know now how I want to live, and I feel free to choose that. I begin to sense that I am part of a larger order.	Exploring and expressing my authentic self. Learning to accept rather than judge. Beginning to connect with my spiritual or higher Self.
5	My essential nature is not material: I am part of the Divine Mind.	Study of ACIM. Spiritual connection greatly strengthened, with (some) surrender of the separate agenda.

Choosing a guide:

What guides to understanding do we have? One of the blessings of modern western civilization is that it makes readily available the writings of spiritual sages from many cultures and historical periods. Any "New Age" bookstore is replete with texts - the diversity can be bewildering. It is important to make a distinction, first of all, between texts which are simply descriptions of spiritual traditions, and the statements of the great spiritual leaders themselves; to put it bluntly, distinguish between the masters and the commentators. The writings of the latter can be a very useful introduction to spiritual ideas, but for the most authentic and inspiring reading we need to go to the sources themselves, to those remarkable individuals who have achieved a lasting experience of their oneness with the Divine.

The major religions, e.g. Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism and Islam, all have their saints and sages, and those who belong to one of these religions can benefit from seeking

out the writings of these historical figures: for Christians, this might mean reading Teresa of Avila, St John of the Cross, or Meister Eckhardt, for example. A lot of these older works are, however, rather obscure to the modern mind. It would make our task easier if guides could be found who have written in contemporary terms, and in modern languages. Fortunately we do have a small number of highly evolved modern guides; some examples with whom I am familiar: Eknath Easwaran, Eckhart Tolle, Yogananda, Sivananda Radha, Krishnamurti, and the author of A Course in Miracles.

For level 5 of the Healing Journey I have chosen texts written by two of these authors: Eckhart Tolle's "A New Earth", and "A Course in Miracles" (ACIM). They can be seen as alternate or complementary readings for level 5; I've labeled them "5A" and "5B". "A New Earth" (5A) is much the simpler of the two, and should be readily understandable to anyone who has completed HJ levels 1-3. "A Course in Miracles" (5B) is a more detailed and profound text, requiring more intense study. The benefits to be gained from each are not necessarily related to ease of reading. In this workbook I first set out a series of exercises based on Tolle's book, and then a similar series on ACIM. The choice will depend on the setting in which level 5 is carried out, and on the preferences of individual students.

HJ 5A: “A New Earth” by Eckhart Tolle.

Tolle is a contemporary German-Canadian author (living in Vancouver) who had a sudden enlightenment experience at age 29 (which he describes in his earlier book “The Power of Now”). This led him to a prolonged period of study and practice, and ultimately to his present role as a much-loved spiritual teacher. He has chosen to emphasise one path to enlightenment: learning to focus on the present moment (the “Now”), in place of our usual exclusive preoccupation with past and future. As we gradually realize that “this moment is all there is” we come to see that we are not our ego-minds, not our bodies, but an eternal part of an all-inclusive Whole. While Tolle is not aligned with any particular religion or tradition, his teachings are probably closest in nature to Buddhism. There is nothing in them to offend those who are averse to any consideration of a “Divinity” or God. For those who wish to immerse themselves thoroughly in Eckhart Tolle’s teachings, there are a large number of CDs and DVDs available from Namaste Publishing, in Vancouver (www.namastepublishing.com). A set of 6 CDs entitled “The Art of Presence” is an excellent introduction.

I’ve arranged the exercises below into sessions corresponding to the 10 chapters of “A New Earth”, (8 sessions, 2 of them dealing with 2 chapters). Further sessions for revision are recommended once the initial reading is completed. After reading each chapter through, the student may consider the questions or exercises posed; for maximum benefit, it is important to write responses, not simply to muse about them. Writing forces one to clarify one’s thinking, and to come to some definite conclusions. It is most useful to read the exercises some days before the next session, to allow time for thinking about responses before writing.

When the exercises are done by a class, there are several ways that the leader can assist students to make the most of them:

1. Ask that participants read excerpts from their writings at the following class.
2. Ask students to send copies of their writings ahead of the class, so that the leader can read and comment (confidentially) on them at the following class. Writings, with the leader’s comments, may then be returned to participants in a sealed envelope, and selected excerpts then read to the whole group (on a voluntary basis).
3. Group the participants in pairs, they then interact with one another during the writing phase, and offer their joint conclusions and experiences in reading to the whole class at the following meeting.

Note on references to the text: I refer to “page X/paragraph Y”, for example “15/2” is page 15, para 2. Healing Journey levels are abbreviated to HJ1 or HJ 2, for example.

Session 1 (Chapter 1): The Flowering of Human Consciousness

Eckhart Tolle is optimistic: he sees a “new Earth” coming as humans change. The change needs to be radical - a transformation - not simply the adopting of “better” behaviours. It is our individual task to pursue this transformation. Tolle can be our guide; he points out that we are really engaged in finding out who we are, and learning that we are not the “voice in the head”, but something much deeper, beyond thought. We need to learn about how we construct our own illusory identity, and to let that go.

Exercise 1 (pg 6-8) - Recognizing how the voice in the mind behaves:

1. What does “awakening” mean to you (as with all these exercises, be personal, rather than philosophical, in your responses)? Ask yourself, what do I need to do to awaken, and what might it feel like?
2. Review, and write about, what you learned in earlier levels of HJ:
 - HJ1: from the relaxation and mind quietening exercises.
 - HJ2: from meditation
 - HJ3: from examining how the worldly mind (ego) functions: judgment, resentment, guilt, projection.

How would you describe any overall changes in your “way of being”, to this point? What do you think are the next steps?

Exercise 2 (9/3, i.e. pg 9 para 3) - “Sin” as living blindly:

Reflect on and describe how (in what areas) your mental activity is less than “skillful”, and how this causes you distress or misery.

Exercise 3 (15/2) - “Man made ‘God’ in his own image”:

Think back to our discussions in the first session of HJ3. How did you imagine “God”, then and how do you do so now?

Exercise 4 (pg 17-19) - Truth is not found through thought:

How do you attempt to access “truth” (reflect carefully on this - it is central to the authentic life)? Ask yourself, for example:

- What do I need to do to get answers to my questions?
- So what, if any, is the role of thinking? How can it help?
- What does it mean to you to be “spiritual”?

Session 2 (Chapter 2): Ego - the Current State of Humanity

Most people are totally identified with their ego - that sense of being a separate entity, one that has to defend itself against the world. We believe we can protect and enhance our selves by acquiring possessions, and we spend most of our time constructing a nearly continuous mental “story” about ourselves and our lives. Tolle invites us to recognise this, and the tremendous damage it does.

Exercise 1 (pg 28-30; 35/2) - The Illusory Self:

Recall the “roles” exercise of HJ3; if you didn’t do it then, now would be a good time! What roles do you identify with? (“I am a”)? What does your ego seek to achieve with these roles?

Exercise 2 (38/1) - Identification with Things:

Consider the questions raised by Tolle in that paragraph. If you own a residence, consider what that does to your sense of self, and whether that sense is warranted.

Exercise 3 (44/1) - The Need to be “Right”:

What concepts do you feel you must be “right” about (keep it personal: “I have a right to; I must have.....”)?

Exercise 4 (52/1 and 2) - The “Inner Body”:

Try this exercise, as described by Tolle.

Exercise 5 (53/3; 54/1) - Identifying with Thoughts about Yourself:

Thoughts are “forms” too: they are the result of nerve cells undergoing electrochemical changes in the head. There is not much difference between thinking of ourselves as a body, or as a series of thoughts. As Tolle puts it: when we think of ourselves as form, body and thoughts, we live a “nightmare”.

Look back at your responses to exercises 1 - 4 above, (and exercise 6 below) and reflect on how your thoughts about yourself create distress and extreme limitation.

Exercise 6 (51/2; 57/2, 3; 58/1) - Accepting vs. Resisting:

If you have a disease or disability (or other problem), consider how you may have come to see yourself as “a cancer patient” or “someone who is). Which of the following applies to you (your thoughts may well be a mixture of any or all of these):

- “I feel like a victim; have had bad luck, it’s unfair, I’m resentful, sad for myself”.
- “I feel like a fighter; must resist this, deny its implications and possible consequences, be angry and frustrated”.
- “I feel like an acceptor; sad but open to whatever happens; feeling a “connection” that goes beyond the immediate situation”.
- Other thoughts and feelings (specify).

Session 3 (Chapter 3): The Core of Ego

This chapter is about the ego, a kind of “computer virus” that has infected, and largely taken over, our minds. Viewed through this false “program”, the world and everyone in it are potentially threatening to the individual, who sees herself as a separate body-mind. The ego strives to be “right”, to be superior to others, in order to protect itself. Tolle points out that to escape this illusion we need to find, and identify ourselves with, the consciousness, Presence, awareness (the terms mean the same thing) that underlies it - our true Mind, in fact.

Exercise 1 (pg 59-61) - How Our Thoughts are Almost All about Ourselves:

Throughout the Healing Journey, we have emphasised the central importance of “watching the mind”. This vital skill can be learned by sitting with the eyes closed and observing thoughts, and then by simply watching them most of the time, as we carry on our daily activities. Now observe (best done sitting with eyes closed at first) how much of your thinking is about yourself, directly or indirectly. For example: “I need to do....; X will be expecting me to....; I hope she doesn’t make the mistake of....; I wonder what they are doing....?”. If you are honest about this you will find that most of it is designed to bolster one’s own ego in some way, such as by judging others, or commenting on situations and how appealing or not they may be. To use another metaphor: it’s like having a “filter” of the kind photographers use, placed directly in front of the eyes. That filter is: “I must protect, edify, and justify myself”. Write about it.

Exercise 2 (pg 61 - 64) - Non-Reaction in Place of Resentment:

Review the “resentments” exercise of HJ2.

Now think of someone you resent. Reflect on the basis for this, and try to determine how much of it is aimed at justifying yourself, your own sense of rightness and worth. Look for projection (HJ3). Then apply this to various aspects of your life, such as political views, finances, interactions with others, work, child rearing, neighbours...

It can be painful at first if you are honest about these ego-dismantling exercises, because they show us what may have been hidden all our lives. Yet it is essential for authenticity (HJ4) that we acknowledge the ego’s manipulations, in order to escape from them. Religious fundamentalism, and probably even war, would be impossible among people who practised this kind of self awareness.

Exercise 3 (pg 81-82) - The Need to Feel Superior:

(Another of these unpleasant investigations of the ego self!). Think of other people and whether you feel inferior or superior to them, and in what ways. Ask yourself what sense of

self-enhancement or protection appears to come from those evaluations. In the same vein, analyse your need to be respected, or thought good at some skill. What might others think of you if you lost your various skills (e.g. if you contracted dementia?)

Exercise 4 (84/2) - We Usually Want Something from Others:

Tolle points out that when we operate from ego, our relationships are always designed to get something from others. Even resenting them, or indifference to them, is ego-serving. Explore this in your life; it might be wise to start with individuals who are not central figures in your life!

Session 4 (Chapter 4): Role Playing - the Many Faces of the Ego

This chapter continues the discussion of the many ways in which ego manifests itself. There is a good deal of repetition, but the issue is so important - "who am I; ego or something else?" - that further reflection is amply warranted.

Exercise 1 (102/1,2) - Accepting as Opposed to Resisting Disease:

Review your notes from exercise 6 in session 2. Now take this a stage further. If you have a disease (or any kind of distressing symptoms, physical or mental), re-examine how you play the role of "patient", or "suffering person", "martyr", "brave coper", "victim", or however else you see yourself in these circumstances. Watch how you get caught up in your suffering. Now imagine accepting rather than resisting the suffering, as Tolle suggests. Think, for example: "My body is in pain, but I am not my body", and try to get a sense of the Self beyond form.

Exercise 2 (pg 106-109) - Being with Others:

When meeting with other people, particularly those whom you don't see often, or who are new to you, practise simply "being" as Tolle recommends. This is difficult for most of us, but we can at least watch what our minds are doing, or reflect after the meeting on what happened. Few people are completely comfortable when meeting someone unfamiliar. Notice how much of the discomfort, or non-centredness, comes from the need to "protect" oneself.

Exercise 3 (pg 110-118) – Unhappiness:

Next time you feel unhappy, and have sufficient awareness or presence to recognise that, ask yourself: "what thoughts am I allowing that are creating this unhappy feeling?"

Consider how Tolle's list (p114) of negative thoughts may apply to you.

Exercise 4 (pg 127-128) - Immortality!:

Meditate on the ideas expressed in these pages. To pursue this further you could find an affirmation that you can repeat to yourself, e.g.: "I am part of the Divine, and I am immortal".

Session 5 (Chapters 5 and 6): The “Pain Body”

The central idea here is that we are largely imprisoned by our negative thinking. Tolle has a metaphor to describe the accumulated fears and self-doubts that we all carry around: the “pain body”. An alternative (to my mind better) metaphor would be “pain program”. This set of old memories and habits of thought occupies much of our minds and keeps us locked into a cycle of angry and fearful responsiveness to events around us.

Tolle uses some terms and concepts here that do not fit very well with modern science; for example, the idea that a pain-body can be passed on genetically, or that thoughts have a specific “vibrational frequency” (pg 146) - this latter idea is not something that is measurable at present, and he may intend it again as metaphor. However, these discrepancies do not affect the main argument.

Exercise 1 (pg 129-131) - “I am not my thoughts”:

These pages follow the argument (on “immortality”) made at the end of chapter 4 (pg 127 - 128). Reflect on our habit of thinking of “my life”, “my body” and so on. Tolle points out how that convention (which is all it is) separates us from life itself, and from the world. It gets worse! We identify completely, as he points out, with our thoughts. It’s as if we were playing a continual video game, in a seedy arcade, unaware of the beautiful sunshine outside.

Instead we can see thinking as something the body-mind does (pg 129), just like digesting, but the thinking is not who we are. Meditate on this, seeking to get some “distance” between your self and your thoughts.

Exercise 2 (136/3; 137/1,2) - Contrasting positive emotions (ego) with states of feeling “connected”:

If you find Tolle’s discussion here, and in the preceding pages a bit difficult to follow, it might help to think of the following 3 kinds of reaction to events in the world:

1. “Instinctive” reactions: the body-brain simply responds, without much or any involvement of thought. The simplest of these are reflexes, like goose-bumps on the skin in cold weather. More elaborate ones might involve some memories; e.g. fear, prompted by a hearing sudden squeal of brakes; hunger in response to an enticing smell. At the complex end of the spectrum, these become continuous with (2) below.
2. Emotional reactions: A perception stimulates thoughts which cause a body response. A simple example would be fear provoked by seeing someone driving a car as if to run into you. A more sophisticated example might be your mixture of emotional responses

when someone makes a critical remark about you. “Positive” examples: pleasure at being praised, or at buying a new item of clothing. Having an “emotion” means that the ego is involved; it is our separate self that fears, wants, feels gratified.

3. Feeling “connected”: Tolle describes these as “deeper emotions that emanate from your natural state of connectedness with Being” (136/3). They are independent of thought, and of ego. The sages point to the difficulty of describing them, since language has evolved from ego experience, but the feelings alluded to include joy, love, bliss, a sense of cosmic connectedness.

As an exercise, reflect on recent experiences of “positive emotion”, such as feeling happy because you received a gift, were complimented, or made or achieved something important to “you”. Look for the role of ego in this happiness, and for the opposite emotion hidden within (137/1). For example, being complimented is pleasant, but may be accompanied by an underlying feeling that (“don’t deserve this: if they only knew!”)

Contrast how you feel after an effective meditation.

Exercise 3 (pg 139-141) - Carrying Painful Memories from the Past:

Identify one or more unpleasant (usually self-critical) memories that you have been “carrying around” for years (and perhaps making yourself miserable by periodically replaying them!). Can you see why the ego loves this process?

Exercise 4 (147/3, and the rest of the chapter) - “Enjoying” Psychological Pain:

Think of a recent example where you indulged in being critical, angry, frustrated, etc. Self-righteous indignation is an obvious example of people “enjoying” their anger, but more subtle cases can be found: for example, “I have to clean up her mess” may have an enjoyable component, in that it places me in a superior position. Another example: criticism by others, while not overtly enjoyable, may be acceptable because it appears to confirm one’s fears about oneself.

Exercise 5 (Chapter 6) - Breaking Free of the Pain Body:

Chapter 6 is a discussion of how the pain body controls our lives, and how we can begin to break free of this conditioning. As an exercise in “breaking free”, think of situations where you have had a strong emotional reaction to something happening in the past. Let yourself experience the feelings (as in HJ3, it may help to “replay the videotape” a few times). Now try various ways to defuse the memory:

1. Following Tolle (pg 164-166), identify your resistance to aspects of the experience,

and try to drop that - just allowing the memory; putting a “space” around it.

2. Imagine being an observer, watching the replay from outside (this is in fact what we are doing when we reside in the Higher Self, and watch the antics of the ego).

3. Imagine your Inner Healer (HJ2), or a spiritual figure, or God, watching over you, accepting you completely, whatever your actions and feelings. You can add an affirmation to this process, e.g.: “I am part of the Divine Mind, and completely secure”. Practise this kind of non-reaction as you go about your daily round

Session 6 (Chapter 7): Finding Who You Truly Are

We can only find out who we truly are if we first understand how we have created a false sense of self - “the story of me” as Tolle puts it. Then we have the choice of dropping (at least some of) our focus on that story, quelling the compulsive thinking, and allowing the Higher Self to emerge.

Exercise 1 (pg 186-189) - Finding Out What Upsets and Disturbs Us:

Review the main events of the past that have caused you emotional upset. The point here is to find a number of things, extending back over weeks, months or years; then look for patterns, for underlying common causes of their impact. For example, you might find that you tend to be upset when you don't feel respected or valued; or it may be that you have often felt frustrated, not getting or achieving what you wanted; or you might be upset with a pattern of not responding to challenges as you would like to do. You may be able to find a common pathway behind these emotionally disturbing events - at the deepest level, they tend to undermine our opinion of ourselves and our worth.

Exercise 2 (pg 190-192) - Giving from abundance:

“Abundance” is a glorious concept. If we see the world as abundant, and ourselves as partaking of this, we can only feel happy and benevolent. Try imagining you have, in abundance, all the things you believed (in the last exercise) that you were not getting; then pass these attributes or attitudes on to others for a week or so (191/1).

Exercise 3 (195/2) - Looking Without Thinking:

Practise observing things, especially in natural surroundings, while not allowing your mind to think about them. This can be done as a meditation - sitting observing something without allowing thoughts about it. When you do this for 5 or 10 minutes, what are your feelings towards the object observed?

Exercise 4 (198/4; 207/2,4) - Saying “Yes” to What Happens:

A practice related to the one in the last exercise is to observe events or things, and instead of the usual appraisal/judgment, dredging up negative associations or memories, say “Yes”, and mentally accept them.

This can be done with “time”: whenever you feel pressed to hasten into the future, say “Yes” to the present.

Exercise 5 (211/2) - The “Horizontal” and “Vertical” Dimensions of Life:

You might like to make a chart in the form of a cross, and on the horizontal arm (representing time) plot your main aspirations in the past and for the future. Then on the vertical arm, plot how you see the path of evolution of your spiritual understanding and connectedness.

Session 7 (Chapter 8): The Discovery of Inner Space

This chapter is a further discussion of the central theme - that we can find out who we are if we drop the focus on “things”, on material objects, including ourselves, and on our stream of thoughts. Tolle has a number of suggestions on specific techniques to help us make this shift: I highlight some of these below. You could try them all, then select 1 or 2 for continuing practice.

Exercise 1 (pg 232-233) - Becoming aware of the space between the thoughts:

In our daily meditation we become aware of this space. Try now to be aware of it as you go about your daily activities.

Exercise 2 (236/2) - Meditating on “I am” or “I am that”:

Tolle’s comment here reminds us of the Indian mantra for meditation that we encountered in HJ3: “Hamsa; soham”, meaning “I am that; that I am”.

Exercise 3 (pg 240-241) - Observing objects without thought:

This is the now-familiar exercise (from last session and before) of looking intently at some familiar object, while trying not to allow into your mind any thoughts about it.

Exercise 4 (pg 241-243) - “Who is the experiencer?”:

Tolle discusses here a movement away from form and qualities, and towards awareness of Self. This was the basis of the single practice advocated by Ramana Maharshi, a great Indian sage of the early twentieth century. Whenever there is a thought or emotion, Ramana would say, ask yourself 2 questions: first, “Who is thinking or feeling this?” The inevitable response is, “I am”). Then second, ask “Who am I?” We quickly discover that all experiences lead to this second question.

You might like to explore this for yourself. “Who am I?”, if constantly brought to the front of the mind, acts like a Zen kōan.

Exercise 5 (pg 243-246) - Awareness of Breathing:

Throughout the Healing Journey we have pointed to awareness of the breath as a method to interrupt the compulsive thinking. You could return to this basic meditation and explore it in more depth now.

Exercise 6 (pg 246-248) - Dropping addictive behaviours:

Identify one or more addictive behaviour patterns within yourself, and follow Tolle's suggestions (247/2) for diminishing them.

Exercise 7 (252/2) - Awareness of the "inner body":

After reading Tolle's discussion of "inner and outer space" (pp 250 - 253), practise feeling the "inner aliveness" that can be felt within the body.

Session 8 (Chapters 9 and 10): Your Inner Purpose - A New Earth

In these last 2 chapters, Tolle cuts through the usual confusion that surrounds discussions of “purpose in life” by showing us that there are two kinds, or levels, of purpose: the inner, which is the spiritual goal of awakening, and the outer, which comprises all the actions we take in the world (258/2). Ideally, a clear inner purpose informs our outer actions, which are then carried out “through us” rather than by us. The world, of course, typically recognises only ego-driven activity.

Exercise 1 (Chapter 9) - What inspires my goals?:

List all the goals that you have considered important in recent years. (You could refer also to any notes made on goal setting in HJ1 and 3). Has there been an overriding sense of purpose in your life? Examine to what extent this set of goals has been driven by the ego’s desire to “get”, or to protect itself.

Exercise 2 (269/2; 271/2) - Inner purpose:

As you meditate, or before you begin, put to yourself the question: “What is the purpose of the rest of my life?” Try to keep analytical thinking out of it, and let felt-sense, images and “knowings” emerge.

Exercise 3 (285/2) - How the frailty of the body allows inner purpose to emerge:

If you have a life-threatening illness, or if age makes the end of life seem relatively near, reflect/meditate on the opening this creates for your inner purpose to emerge. To what extent do worldly goals seem less important than they used to do? How has your attitude about the importance of the material world changed? To what extent do other peoples’ expectations of you seem to matter now?

Exercise 4 (pg 295-305) - Acceptance, enjoyment, enthusiasm:

Tolle lists these attitudes or modalities as ways in which “consciousness can flow into what you do”. The discussion is fairly brief, so it is important to distinguish the states of mind he describes (namely selfless enjoyment and enthusiasm) from the ego-gratifying states for which the same labels are commonly used. The table below may help.

	Expressing Ego Needs	Expressing Spiritual Awareness
Acceptance	Resignation; giving up	Non-reaction; "surrender"
Enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emotional excitement - Achievements that strengthen ego (self-worth) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observing others being helped - Feeling of "flow", oneness, connectedness
Enthusiasm	Foreseeing ego-enhancement as a result of your activity	Feeling directed, used by the Divine, to perform actions that help others

Make a list of your major activities, and assign them to one of the 6 categories in the table (refer also to the similar exercise in HJ4).

Review Sessions

The point of studying the writings of a spiritual master like Tolle is not simply to acquire new ideas, but to use them to achieve a new way of being in the world. Thus it can be very helpful to have one or two additional sessions (or more) to discuss with others your efforts to understand and integrate the concepts. A fruitful area for discussion is the honest sharing of the obstacles to progress you encounter. Some further topics for possible discussion:

1. Inner and outer purpose: (chapters 9 and 10)
2. The idea, prominent in Indian philosophy, that the world is a kind of Divine “play”, or “dream”. Imagine how it might help you if you could see all your heavy responsibilities and anxieties as part of a “game”. (280/2)
3. Are you a “frequency holder” or more of an “activist”? Examine honestly the motives behind your choices; e.g. a frequency holder can act as such for exalted motives, or because of inertia or fear. An activist may be “allowing herself to be used as a channel”, or may simply be aiming at self justification! (307/2,3)

Recognise that as humans we (almost) all have mixed motives, and give yourself a pat on the back for trying to evolve!

HJ 5B: “A Course in Miracles”

The source to be studied for this version of HJ5 is a most remarkable book from an unusual source. The author is none other than Jesus Christ himself, arguably the most important spiritual teacher (for western peoples) in 2 millennia! “But didn’t he die 2000 years ago?” ACIM is a text “channeled” from Jesus, through an atheistic psychologist, Helen Schucman, over a period of 7 years, beginning in 1965. She “heard” a voice, identifying itself as Jesus, and dictated daily installments of what has become the text to a colleague, William Thetford, who typed up the material, which was eventually published in 1976. This history is likely to inspire more than a little scepticism in some who encounter it for the first time! In fact, there are many examples of such channeling - the Koran was channeled, for example. Texts generated in this way should be judged by the nature of the material received; the content, rather than the source, is after all what matters to us, and the material of ACIM is quite exceptional. It is a text on healing at all levels, psychological, physical and spiritual. It is by far the most sophisticated and profound material on self-initiated healing, and on the nature of our “reality”, that I have encountered in about 30 years of searching, which is why I draw on it here. Moreover it is written in modern language, with psychologically understandable reasoning (although the conclusions go far beyond the conventional). It offers us an extraordinary opportunity to evolve, and although Christian in terminology and origin, is not conventionally Christian at all: in fact certain sections offer a correction to many of the misconceptions that have crept into the new Testament of the Bible as a result of centuries of injection of human ideas and values into that text. A typical reaction to something as unusual as this is criticism and summary rejection! We might, however, try a different approach: suspending scepticism and seeing what it can do for us, upon which we may become filled with gratitude to both the author and the two ordinary people who persevered, year after year, in making the course available to us all.

Since 1976, several million copies of ACIM have been distributed in many languages. A lot of intelligent people have written commentaries explaining some of the concepts in it. There are also a number of popular books written by mental health professionals who base their texts around ACIM, for example those by Marianne Williamson, Karen Bentley and Gerald Jampolsky, among others (reading some of these books can be a helpful introduction). The “Foundation for ACIM” has been established under the direction of Dr Ken Wapnick, perhaps the foremost exponent of the course, and a man who was present in the early stages of its publication. The website, www.facim.org is a resource centre for materials (many books, audio- and videotapes, plus advice on workshops), and questions may be put, on the site, to foundation staff.

What Does ACIM Say, and Why is it Hard To Read?

Perhaps the most important revelation, in ACIM as in other mystical writings, is that “God” or the Divine Source is within us all, and not some authoritarian being outside ourselves, as often represented in the theistic religions. To put it another way, we are all part of the Divine, but we have lost sight of that; our task is to recover this awareness. We are primarily “mindstuff” rather than body, and are not separate, from God or from others, so we need not attack (i.e. resist, judge) any of them! Fully realizing this is healing.

It must be conceded, however, that ACIM is often difficult reading. (The “Workbook” part of it, as you will find, is perhaps simpler than the main text, and the “Manual for Teachers” easier still, and therefore may be a place to start as one is becoming acquainted with the course). Why is much of the text so difficult? In part because it turns most of our conventional ideas about “reality” through 180 degrees. And in part because it seems to be designed to make us think hard, so that we truly master the material, rather than have it “slip down” and be forgotten. The terminology can pose an initial barrier to some readers also, appearing sexist (always “he” and “your brothers”), and Christian in some of its symbology. We simply must allow any old hackles this raises to subside, and get on with the substance of the text, if we are going to benefit from it.

While anyone can of course plunge right into ACIM and make their own way through it, most do find it difficult (I still have trouble understanding some parts after 20 years of study). So what I have tried to do in this manual is to provide a simpler access, and one which emphasises ideas that might assist our “physical” as well as mental healing. We do this by selecting passages that illustrate themes, and asking you to meditate and reflect on these, then write about your understanding. The themes are arranged in a logical and gradual way.

An outline of the process of separating and healing.

We began, and are still all part of One Mind, which may be called by various names – “God”, the Divine, the Source, the One and so on. ACIM uses “God”, sometimes the “Father” (which can be validly translated into “Divine Mother” if you wish). The important point, however, is that we are not ultimately material but “mental”, the inverted commas denoting that this is an approximation - we can’t, from this earthly vantage point, expect to understand fully what such a different state of being would be like. At some point, for reasons that are not clear (I like what the Hindus say, that it’s “God’s play”!), we became temporarily separated from God (see Table 2). “We” here means that some part or aspect of God believed itself to be separate, although this was immediately corrected. This apparently separate part is called the “Son of God” in ACIM. The separation is an illusion, and the separated mind retains that awareness, a kind of connecting link that ACIM calls the “Holy Spirit” (or we can call it the “Higher Self”, and use the same initials, HS). Because of the guilt such a radical separation invoked, there was immediately a fragmentation of this mind into millions of apparently

separate beings, each clothed in material substance, the purpose being (to put it simply) so that others could now be blamed for “my” predicament. Each unit however still contained a knowledge of the whole - the separation was, and is an illusion, to say it yet again, a kind of dream or play put on by the separated mind.

We are, unfortunately, some of the apparently separated beings arising from this “Big Bang” of creation. We start from the following misconception, to paraphrase Descartes: “I think I’m separate, therefore I am”. But it is a false conclusion. We can “swim back upstream”, return to our original home, simply by a change in perception. This is not easy because, as a result of our presumed separateness, we have developed all kinds of fearful ideas about our guilt (ultimately towards the Divine, for leaving it/Him), and vulnerability (to retribution from Him, and to attack by others). We therefore have surrounded ourselves by defenses, including our material bodies as a defense, and we have buried the knowledge of our true nature underneath all of this. Now, we say, we are simply bodies, and we may even get ill and die to prove it! The material world, and particularly other people, are blamed for all our problems. Table 2 shows this in outline - the stages of separation (progressing downwards on the left side of the table) and the thoughts that accompany them (right side of the table). Table 3 shows some of the main messages of the course. The 3 figures below explain this further.

Table 2: Development of a sense of separateness, and its consequences	
Process of Separation	Corresponding Ideas and Fears
DIVINE MIND	Peace, love, joy, harmony
[a part temporarily ‘splits off’, for unknown reasons]	
Separated state: the appearance of multiple, apparently material beings	There is no “Divine”; the material world determines everything
Personal view of oneself as being separated from all other things	I am only a separate body My ego is my mental identity
Emotional reaction to this sense of oneself as separate	I am limited, vulnerable, guilty, and (unconsciously) fearful of divine retribution
Reaction to other apparently separate beings	Because I am separate, I must defend myself and attack others

Table 3: ACIM Main messages

1. We have misunderstood who and what we are.

- We think we are a separate little mind-body, which ACIM calls “ego”. This small ego-mind is in fact like a computer virus, a “program” that has taken over the whole mind
- It is largely insane, harmful to us; nevertheless we typically let it guide us totally

2. In fact, we are “mind” in nature, not body, and part of the Divine Mind.

- ACIM calls this unity “the Kingdom (of Heaven)”.
- All of us, the “sonship”, are part of this, and therefore joined together; we are in fact on mind.

3. The ego fights to preserve itself.

- We need to learn about its harmful strategies
- The ego sees itself as central, as the author of itself, as “special”.
- It strives to preserve its separateness.
- It maintains, in us, a sense of guilt, unworthiness (concealed, and projected out).
- It attacks us and uses illness to prove its separateness and vulnerability.

4. What we need to do to return to an awareness of our essential unity with the Divine, and thus to heal completely.

- ACIM calls this return to oneness the Atonement

Practical strategies:

A. Being quiet:

- watch the mind constantly
- do as little random thinking as possible
- recognize I know nothing, and am open to new understanding

B. Non-reaction

- non-judgment, non-attack, forgiveness, acceptance
- learn that we need only to give; true giving and receiving are the same
- practise gratitude and kindness to all.

C. Devotion.

- we are not separate from the divine
- listen for guidance; stop trying to control everything
- prayer becomes communion, surrender
- observe and drop own guilt
- do practices, like meditation, that strengthen concentration and focus
- orient life around spiritual identity, not ego.
- non-specialness; we are each one with all
- know our grandeur and irreplaceability; value oneself.

Fig 1 is a “pyramid” illustrating the path, from our usual sense of being separate, scattered beings (at the base of the pyramid), back up to awareness of our essential unity or wholeness.

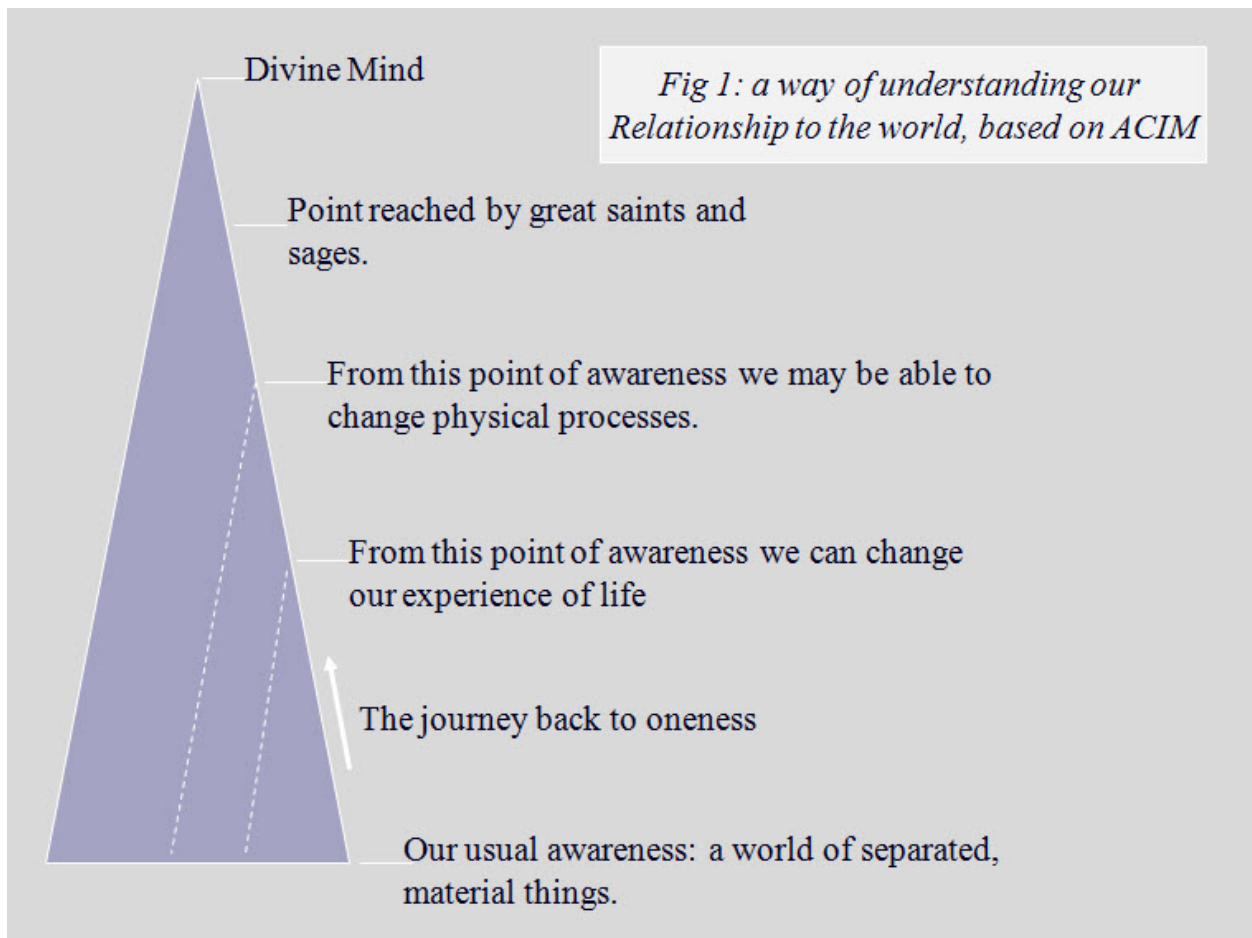
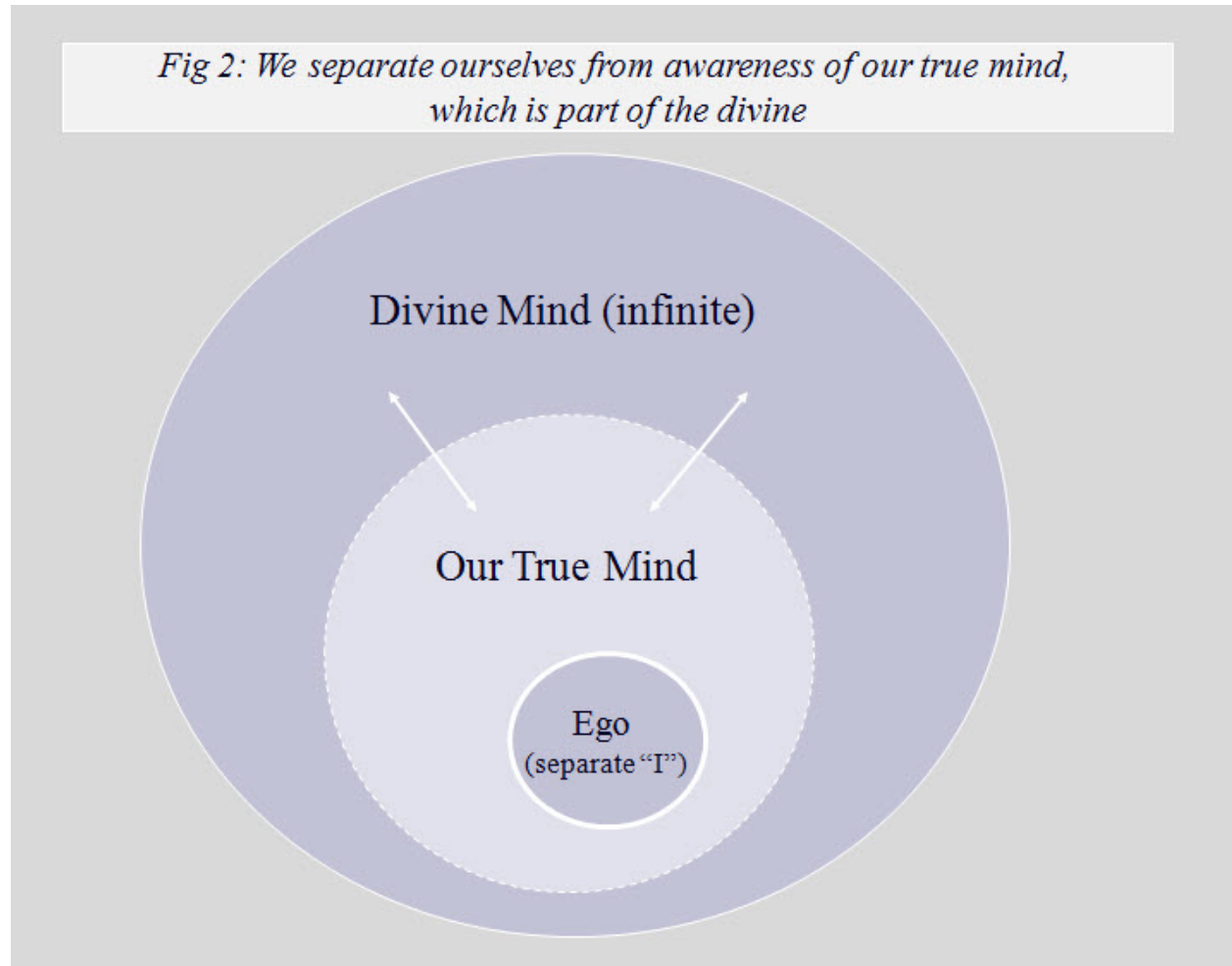


Fig 2 shows us as a tightly walled off ego (a small circle) within a larger circle (our true or extended mind, including the unconscious), which is in turn included within an infinitely large circle, the Divine Mind.



A degree of healing can be achieved without invoking spiritual connection and change - for example, by management of stress and aligning ourselves with a purpose in life that is fulfilling and meaningful to ourselves. Any kind of healing requires initial openness to change, motivation, and a fair amount of work (top part of fig 3), but given that, it may go in different directions. The lower left hand side of fig 3 shows a secular path to healing through psychological change. Our research over the last 15 years has provided firm evidence for the "openness" to "involvement" steps, and the development of "authenticity" in people who have greatly outlived their prognoses. The spiritual route to healing involves developing a particular kind of "authenticity", namely our identity as part of the Divine. This is illustrated by the lower right hand side of the diagram. It may be even more powerfully healing, but we don't as yet have scientific evidence for that.



Spiritual healing is the reversal of separation, a shift in perception of what we are. It affects every aspect of our lives including all those listed in the tables. This shift is what ACIM calls a “miracle”. The whole text is thus about healing, although not specifically healing of the body, since it views that as an illusion; the hope is that by correcting the overarching illusion, all aspects of ourselves will return to harmony. As we read the text we will receive many ideas about how to heal - i.e. what “healing” is will be expressed in many different ways. This can be confusing until you see that these different ways refer to different points along the process of separation (Table 2). We can heal by forgiving our “brothers”; something that we emphasised in level 3 of the Healing Journey course. This requires recognizing that they have not “sinned” against us, merely fallen into error (as have we all), and that even an apparent attack on us is simply a disguised “call for help”. Then at a slightly “deeper” level, healing requires forgiving ourselves, recognizing that we are not sinners, destined for punishment. Higher still - that we are not even separate, from the Divine or other people; that somehow our minds are all joined. And even further upstream, as it were, there was no real initial separation from the Divine Mind at all, and hence no real material world was generated to “protect” us and maintain this separation. Occasionally, remarkable individuals will come to this last realization in one leap. Most of us, however, have to work away at the more accessible levels first - our judgment of

others and of ourselves, moving up towards realizing that we are not separate from them, and can risk loving them, and ourselves! As we do this, our emphasis on the material world will diminish (there is no need to fear losing touch with it! We simply learn to have, as the course puts it, a “happy dream” rather than an unhappy one).

Metaphors can help us understand this drastic reversal of ordinary worldly conceptions (“all our conceptions are false” says ACIM!). Here are a few:

1. We could think of the original One Mind as a tree, spreading out into ever smaller branches then twigs and finally leaves. Each of us is a leaf, and our petty concern is to compete with other leaves for various advantages, such as being bigger and more beautiful, or having better access to the sunlight! We can content ourselves with learning to accept the rights of other leaves (the usual limit of human mental healing), or we can move back towards our origins, to where the twigs diverged, and recognize that we are in fact part of the same whole, and ultimately an integral part of the tree/Mind.
2. Another example: when a container of liquid mercury is spilled, it breaks into thousands of tiny droplets, which can readily merge again when pushed together. If, however, these droplets get covered with dust and grit (a metaphor for worldly defensiveness), they stubbornly refuse to merge, and retain their separateness! We need, of course, to remove the grit that normally surrounds each of us.
3. ACIM refers in several places to the metaphor of dreaming. When we dream it is as if our minds split into many separate characters or individuals. Yet they are all part of the one mind. And when we wake, we realize that “it was all a dream”. This, say the mystics, is what we will understand when we awaken from our current worldly dream.
4. Ken Wapnick makes a comparison with the case of people with multiple personality disorder, a pathological condition in which a person assumes, at different times, entirely different personalities that tend to be unaware of one another. Yet they are all parts of the same mind. So it is, he says, with the emanations of the Divine Mind.

If these ideas are all new to you and difficult to understand at first, don’t worry; we will approach this notion of healing by reversing our separateness more gradually in the sessions of the present course. You could come back to this introduction from time to time, to note how your understanding has grown.

Session 1: How ACIM helps us make a radical shift in thinking about ourselves and our place in the world.

Procedure:

It will help you greatly, as you approach a study of ACIM, to have a regular practice of meditation, and to feel thoroughly familiar with mind-watching. You can refresh your memory of these techniques by going back to the relevant sections in earlier levels of the Healing Journey program.

It is obvious that ACIM is not a text that one reads like a novel. Rather we approach it as a scriptural work, to be read in small sections, which are then reflected upon deeply. We need to be asking ourselves, as we read: 'how does this apply to me? What are the implications for my own life?' Inevitably we will find parts we can't comprehend at first. We can return to them many times, over a period of days and weeks; we can meditate on them, meaning simply read with as empty a mind as we can achieve, and sit and wait quietly. Understanding and guidance may come; we can ask for this. Sometimes we just have to move on, and return to the difficult passages weeks or months later when our overall understanding may have improved sufficiently to allow us to absorb what was formerly obscure. We need to be prepared for frustration of this kind, and to accept it, as we also accept the sometimes unfamiliar modes of expression, or the use of new terms and symbols.

Each 'session' deals with a specific topic. You will find a number of suggested readings ('excerpts') on different aspects of this topic, most of which are followed by one or more 'questions'. Please read the suggested text through, several times, think about it and write your responses to the questions (you will be asked to present your thoughts and discuss them in the classes). To get the most out of this work it would be valuable to read the excerpts early in the period between classes, so that you can be considering what they mean over an extended period, before finally setting down your conclusions.

References to the main text of ACIM are shown as in the following example: T-26.IV.4. T means text, 26 is the chapter, IV (roman numerals) is the section, and 4 the paragraph number. If there was more than one paragraph to be examined this would be shown as A4 - 8", for example. The paragraph number may occasionally be followed by numbers of the individual sentences in a paragraph, as in T-26.IV.4:7

For the workbook: W.169.5, refers to the lesson number and paragraph.

For the Manual for Teachers, it's M-13.3, the Question # and paragraph.

Some brief definitions

The terms commonly used in ACIM can be confusing; here are some brief definitions, for future reference, adapted from a 'Glossary' written by Ken Wapnick

- **Atonement:** the Holy Spirit's plan of correction to undo the ego and heal the belief in separation
- **Christ:** the one Son of God, or totality of the Sonship
- **ego:** the belief in the reality of the separated or false self, as a substitute for the Self that God created
- **extension:** the ongoing process of creation, wherein spirit extends itself.
- **forgiveness (acceptance):** changing our perception of what others (or ourselves) appear to have done; seeing apparent 'sins' as simply errors
- **God:** the Creator, Source of all being or life; the First Cause, whose essence is spirit, which is shared with all creation.
- **guilt:** the feeling experienced from perception of one's 'sinfulness'
- **healing:** the correction in the mind of the belief in sickness that makes the separation and the body seem real.
- **Heaven;** the non-dualistic world of knowledge
- **holy instant:** the instant outside time in which we choose forgiveness instead of guilt
- **Holy Spirit:** that part of the mind that is the communication link between God and his separated sons (daughters)
- **"Ideas leave not their source":** i.e. cannot leave the mind that thought them
- **Jesus:** (a man who) first completed his part in the Atonement, by transcending his ego
- **love:** the essence of God's being and relationship to His creation; impossible to experience in the illusory world of perception.
- **mind:** the activating agent of spirit, to which it is roughly equivalent, supplying its creative energy.
- **Mind of God:** the creative function of God.
- **miracle:** the change of mind that shifts our perception from the ego's world of sin, guilt and fear, to the Holy Spirit's world of forgiveness (not to be confused with the traditional understanding of miracles as changes in external phenomena)
- **projection:** the fundamental law of mind: what we see inwardly determines what we see outside our minds.
- **real world:** the state of mind in which, through total forgiveness (acceptance), the world of perception is released from the projections of guilt we had placed upon it.
- **resurrection:** awakening from the dream of death
- **revelation:** the direct communication from God to His son; only briefly possible in this world.
- **sacrifice:** the ego's mistaken idea that someone must lose if another is to gain.
- **salvation:** the Atonement, or undoing of the separation, from a change of mind
- **Self:** our true identity as Son (Daughter) of God; synonymous with the Christ.
- **sickness:** a conflict in the mind (guilt) displaced on to the body; the ego's attempt to defend

itself against truth (spirit) by focussing attention on the body

- **sin**: the belief in the reality of our separation from God
- **Son of God**: the Christ who is our true Self
- **Spirit**: the nature of our true reality, changeless and eternal
- **world**: the effect of the ego's belief in separateness.

The teaching methods of ACIM

Excerpt 1.1: The 'Introduction' to the workbook. (W.Intro)

The workbook. If you haven't already done so, look at the 'Workbook for Students', one of 3 texts bound into 1 volume comprising ACIM. You will see that there are 365 daily lessons for self study, aimed at re-training the mind, establishing a view of 'reality' that is quite different from our conventional view. It is of course up to you if and when you commence the workbook exercises; some will want to plunge into it immediately, others may prefer to begin later after having worked through some of the material in this present introductory course.

What is your reaction to the workbook introduction? Does it seem like a daunting task? Are you afraid of being 'brainwashed'? Consider the extent to which we have all been brainwashed or conditioned already by our culture, through the education system, the media, and so on. Write briefly about this.

Excerpt 1.2: The Lessons of the Holy Spirit (T-6.V.1-4)

This is very straightforward. Perhaps you find it comforting? Or you might be offended by the 'children' analogy; yet are we not all spiritual 'children'? And as you proceed with this work you may come to see the world as full of 'children', which is not necessarily a condescending attitude - just a recognition that most people don't even get started on the path to spiritual growth and understanding.

If you want to try something more challenging, read on into the next section, marked AA. To have all give all to all' on pg 104 (second edition). Meditate on paragraphs 1 - 3. What is your reaction to the statement that 'the body is separate and therefore cannot be part of you'?

Excerpt 1.3: The direction of the curriculum (T-8.I.1-6).

What do you make of the statement in para 3: 'Every response to the ego is a call to war'? This may at first seem extreme or exaggerated, like a lot of statements in ACIM. Note how your mind deals with that - do you therefore reject it, or do you wonder whether you have been underestimating or failing to understand the aggressive nature of your ego-thinking?

Paragraph 5 talks about a new 'curriculum'. Are you ready for a new curriculum in your life? Has the original one made you happy, as Jesus asks? If there is to be a new plan for our (thinking) life, we need a new teacher. Do you feel willing to allow that, and if not, why not (examine this closely).

Note the similarity between 'if you want a different (outcome) a change... is obviously necessary', and the idea, from HJ level 1, that to change the course of cancer, a sufficient change is necessary in the mind to change the 'soup' in which the cancer is growing.

Healing as Wholeness and Joy.

Excerpt 1.4. Introduction to Healing and Wholeness. (T.5.Intro.1-3) (p72).

This section is more profound than it may seem at first reading (like most, perhaps all of ACIM!). The first thing to ponder is one of many definitions of 'healing': 'To heal is to make happy'. 'Happiness' in ACIM means more than transitory sensory or intellectual pleasure - it means joyousness, which we are told is the same as love. Write about what 'joy' is, drawing on the material in this section.

Attending to the 'Voice for God'

Excerpt 1.5. The Voice for God. (T.5.II.1-8)

There is, obviously, a great deal in this section; in fact one might almost say that the whole course is there. This is a feature of ACIM: like a hologram, each part contains the whole. Another way to put it is that if we could completely understand and internalise this section, we would not need to read any further!

The whole section may be too much to absorb completely at present, but read it through and reflect on the following points:

- There is a voice within us, called here the Holy Spirit, which is that part of the separated mind that is still connected to God. We can learn to listen to that, by subduing the ego mind.*
- This voice offers; it does not command.*
- In the later paragraphs, (9 - 12) Jesus points out we are just like him - except that he chose to listen only to the voice for God!*

Do you have any sense yet of another 'voice' within? It is unlikely to resemble listening to the telephone - more a kind of knowing or felt sense of what to do.

The metaphor: life as a dream.

Excerpt 1.6. The Basis of the Dream (T.18.II.1-6).

This section introduces the very helpful metaphor of life as a kind of waking dream. Note that the 'special relationship' (para 5) is the conceiving of a relationship with another person, or with God, that attempts to set one apart from and above others (this becomes a key theme later on).

Session 2: How we think of 'God', and who we are in relationship to 'Him'.

Who or what is 'God'?

Excerpt 2.1: The Little Garden (T-18.VIII:1- 7):

Ignore the first 5 sentences of para 1 for the present, but consider the last 2 sentences. Do you think of God as something outside yourself, as a kind of super-person? Does that make any sense really? Note how your ideas (probably unexamined) have conditioned the way you think of God/the Divine.

Now consider paras 2 - 7. Can you see how we all tend to imprison ourselves in an insignificant body? Can you begin to think of yourself as part of a non-material whole, which is 'God'? What would be some of the advantages of this way of thinking?

Read the rest of para 1. It's a bit difficult, so don't be concerned if it's not entirely clear yet. What do you think the author means by 'the body is a limit on love'?

Excerpt 2.2. Beyond the Body (T-18.VI:1, 11, 9).

This section continues the idea of the last. We have all heard of 'The Kingdom of Heaven'; how have you imagined it? Consider para 1, sentence 6 – 'the awareness of perfect Oneness'. What might that be like? After thinking about that, read para 11. Have you had an experience like this? Can you see how love, in the spiritual sense (and how is that different from worldly love?) depends on losing our attachment to separateness? What fears does this raise in you?

Para 9 expounds the idea that we are part of God. Some of this is straightforward, if very different from our usual way of viewing ourselves, while other parts are more difficult. What do you understand from sentences 6 - 8? (Para 10 may help also).

Paras 1 - 6 are more difficult, but at this stage you may want to review them, without any sense of guilt (!) or inadequacy if they are not clear as yet. They seem to say that we have made our bodies a kind of repository for our guilt (originating where?) The claim is that we hate and attack our bodies - why would we do that? According to ACIM, (the illusion of) illness comes from the way our minds use the body-fantasy that we have made; para 6 calls this 'insane', while para 5 says we can use the body for loving purposes. Perhaps this suggests ways in which we could view the body differently, so that it might no longer need to be seen as 'sick'.

Excerpt 2.3. Reason and Perception (T-21. Intro, I, II). (i.e. the Introduction and first 2 sections of chapter 21).

You may need to read this a number of times, to let the meaning sink in (that is true of most of this book, as you will have discovered – it's no doubt 'intentional'; we retain best what we have to work at). Note that 'vision' here (a term explained earlier in the text) means true

perception, 'seeing' the truth, the world of the Divine, rather than the material world that we have created.

Section I starts with an intriguing analogy between ourselves and the blind (paras 1 - 5). Ponder this. Then paras 6 - 8 are a lyrical account of the 'truth' that we have almost, but not quite, forgotten. Section II reminds us that we are responsible for what we perceive (the Introduction put the same idea in a different way). Perhaps you have already discovered in your life that we make situations into what we 'want' them to be? ACIM is now taking this idea much further - that we create even material events, including illness, by projection (putting what is inside our minds 'outside'). What does JC mean in para 3 when he says "suffer, and you decided sin was your goal"? (Look up 'sin' again in the list of definitions). What is the antidote that JC suggests? (Paras 3 and 4). Continue to paras 6 and 7, where the ideas, as always, are reiterated in slightly different form. Here's that word 'altar' again - what does it mean?

You could write a brief account of your understanding of these sections, but for the present, skip paras II:10 - 13.

Excerpt 2.4. W- 29, 30 (workbook lessons 29 and 30).

Reading these 2 lessons will introduce you to the clarity of these daily readings, and their simplicity in comparison with the ACIM 'text'. The lessons are meant to be studied, as directed, 1 per day, and in order. You may wish to start doing this, or wait until you have a better idea of the overall message of the Course. For the present, please review lessons 29 and 30 and write briefly about your understanding of them. (The same themes are developed through to lesson 50 - keen students may wish to scan these as well).

Session 3: How we Resist the Call of the Divine, and Consequences of Accepting it.

The theme for this session is our resistance to acknowledging our true nature as part of the Divine Mind, in favour of asserting that we are separate - each of us prefers to be the 'centre of our Universe'! This theme recurs throughout the text, as do descriptions of the benefits of learning to accept our true nature.

Excerpt 3.1: Illusions of the Ego (T-4.Introduction,1-3; I. 1-13)

*Para 2 of the Intro quotes the well known biblical clause: "Be still and know that I am God". What does that mean to you? Ponder para 3: there is, as usual, a lot in it. How do you 'crucify' yourself? [Advanced students: **Why** do you crucify yourself?]. What does 'clinging to the old rugged cross' mean?*

Section I is quite long but readily understandable if you go over it a few times. It contains a wealth of instruction and reassurance. Write a summary in point form, i.e. set down the main ideas. One central idea is that, although we are heavily identified with our egos, there is still a part of the mind (Wapnick calls it the 'decision maker' that is free to make choices). What is the key choice we must make? How do you respond to the idea that your 'worth' is absolutely independent of anything you think or do, but is established by God? If you really believed that, how might it change your life? Why (specify) are you creating for yourself a life full of fear?

Excerpt 3.2.: "It is impossible to see two worlds" (W.130, especially paras 1 and 4).

Read through the lesson. Para 1 is an idea that is frequently emphasised in ACIM: we perceive what we want to perceive. Can you think of examples in your ordinary daily life where you tend to see what you want, and overlook what you don't want? ACIM would say that our whole world is created by our projection/perception, therefore we must 'want' it. Why do we want it this way (i.e. a world of separate objects)? What is it we don't want to see? How can we allow God to help (paras 8 and 9)?

Excerpt 3.3.: The Gifts of Fatherhood (i.e. of God). (T-11.I.1-11).

Start with the first sentence in para 6: "God has given you a place in His Mind that is yours forever"! Note how different this may be from our usual way of thinking of ourselves. Then read the rest of the section. Again, make a list of the main points - it clarifies your thinking; everyone's list will be a little different, e.g. AI need healing ...this involves a return to a knowledge of God/the Divine....I can't really exclude myself from Him/That.....I have a unique place there in fact...time means nothing ...(?)...can't contradict God's laws (how presumptuous that would be!)...I am asked to give without limit (what does that mean?)...I should ask what 'God's will' (i.e. my own true will) is in everything...but I don't because it appears to be different from my (the ego's) will, so I'm afraid (of what?)... and so on.

Now focus on para 10, sentences 3 and 4, and 11.9. They are so important to us that I'll reproduce them here:

*'You are afraid to know God's Will, because you believe it is not yours.
This belief is your whole sickness and your whole fear.
...healing is the beginning of the recognition that your will is His.'*

This is clear enough, isn't it, especially when you separate the key ideas from the other text (a useful learning device throughout this study). Comment on the extract. Notice how the mind tends to return to old ideas of 'God' as something separate or parental. Try to come back to thinking of yourself as actually part of God/the Divine. Do the quoted passages suggest to you a direction for your own healing?

Excerpt 3.4. The Invitation to Healing (T-11.II..1-4 and more)

If the last section has whetted your appetite, you may want to read on. Section II, para 1 explains that what we truly want is being rather than having. What does that mean to you? What changes would it make in your thinking life? Para 2 goes on to say that we can heal through understanding - that is the approach ACIM uses (as opposed to, for example, seeking healing only through quieting the ego's chatter, by prolonged meditation). The last sentences of para 2 explain the process of shifting from separation to healing. The first sentence of para 4 is also profound - what does it mean to you? You could compile a growing list of definitions of healing as you come across them: there are many throughout ACIM. The section goes on to describe the change we need to make as making room for, or playing host to the voice for God/Holy Spirit. This is metaphorical of course. A more modern version might be shifting from one program to another on our mental computer. We, the operator, have the power to make the choice.

Session 4: The Ego, and its grievances.

This session, and the next, focus on what ACIM explains is the central problem in our lives - an exclusive identification with a separate thinking self or ego (and its accompanying body).

Excerpt 4.1: Error and the Ego. T-3.IV.

It's valuable to read the whole section of course, and make your own summary. You could focus especially on the following:

- *paras 2 and 3: Ponder the idea that we have created this thing or program that we call 'ego', and that we are now confused and afraid because we sense our separation from something much greater. The practical question is: 'how do I remove the fear? By reversing the separation? How might I approach this?' (Some answers in para 5).*
- *The text continues, to explain perception as a property of ego. We are so conditioned to the idea of knowing through perception that it is hard to conceive of anything else. Contrast this with what ACIM explains as the route to true 'knowledge'. Why is spirit perceived as a threat?*

Excerpt 4.2: The Ego - the Miracle. Clarification of Terms #2 (p81)

Take a look at the 2 last sections of the ACIM volume: 'Manual for Teachers', and 'Clarification of Terms'. The 'manual', particularly, is much easier to read than the main text.

The second section of the 'clarification' is a discussion of ego. We learn that 'ego' is just a thought, a dream, and more alarmingly, a 'thing of madness' (ACIM uses these rather dramatic labels to awaken us to the fact that our usual thinking is so harmful in many ways).

Para 2: Acknowledges that the ego (the separate self) cannot be denied in a world of form; yet does it make sense if we are truly part of the Divine Mind, created and existing outside of time? Ponder this and write your reactions (it does seem strange at first).

A miracle (para 5) is the opposite of perception, or knowing - that we are part of the Divine. Metaphorically, this perception is 'light', while the ego is 'darkness'. Enlightenment means knowing that we are light. That awareness comes to most of us very gradually, not in some blaze of fireworks. You may find yourself reacting to the idea that the ego is 'evil'; it is again a wake-up call. After all, what causes all the conflict in the world except ego?

Consider para 9: it may seem grandiose – 'save the world'?! What is really being asked of us? How might an aspiration to help others improve our health. Might that not be a good reason to 'stick around' on this (illusory?) planet for a while?

Excerpt 4.3. The Decision for guiltlessness. T-14.III.4.

A short excerpt, although you may want to read some of the surrounding text (always helpful).

Put into your own words what the 'choice' is, for you. Why is it presented as a choice between guilt and guiltlessness? (Explain).

Excerpt 4.4. Grievances and the Ego. W #s 68 - 72.

I'm suggesting that you look through these 5 lessons, which are easy to read (compared with much of the main Text). At this point, the aim is to clarify our ideas; in due course you may decide to go through the workbook day-by-day as recommended. Focus first on #72, para 2: a very clear description of the ego and its purposes. Now back to lesson 68.

Lesson 68, para 1: Explain in your own words, thinking of your own life, why holding grievances and knowing your Higher Self are incompatible (please don't be satisfied with paraphrasing what is written in the lesson; instead, really chew it over, try to feel the force of each part of the para). Moving on, how does holding grievances promote guilt? (Turn this around - as with much of ACIM, it aids understanding to do this).

Note how para 5 suggests a similar exercise to the ones we have done earlier in HJ. Para 6 is like the 'feeling myself secure' of level 3 isn't it? Try the exercises a number of times, either in exactly the form given here, or the way in which you did them in HJ; write about it.

Lesson 69. Read the lesson, then try (again a number of times) the meditative exercise described in paras 6 - 8.

Session 5: More about the ego, and the harm it does.

Chapter 4 is a good place to start reading the text of ACIM; after laying out the overall philosophy of the course in chapters 1 - 3, (relatively difficult in places), the author gets down to specifics in this chapter. You will probably find bits you understand and bits you don't, throughout this work - that is to be expected. Some of the harder parts will become clear on later reading.

Excerpt 5.1. The Rewards of God. T-4.VI. 1, 3, 4, 6.

Obviously you can, with benefit, read the whole section. Focus especially on the following:

Para 1:3-7. What does he mean by 'your other life'?

Para 3:1-3. We often speak of 'letting go' (of obsessive control needs). If we do this, what or who is going to guide our thoughts and actions? What is ACIM's solution?

Para 4. Autonomy was cited as one of the qualities associated with prolonged survival in the patients whose experience was drawn on for level 4 of the HJ program. Yet here, and throughout, ACIM is asking us to stop directing ourselves. How can you reconcile these 2 pieces of advice?

Para 6:1-3. How appealing (or not) is the mission that ACIM offers you? What might be the good and bad features of accepting this?

(More advanced students: Explain para 7:2-5 in your own words. Why should we feel 'grateful' to our brothers and sisters? Why do you think he chose this word rather than asking us to 'love' our brothers?)

Excerpt 5.2. The Ego and False Autonomy. T-4.II.

Here we pick up the text of ch 4 after section 2, where we left it in the third session. While not easy, this is a relatively straightforward section, so you could try it all.

Para 5. Does the prospect of diminishing the clamour of your ego feel painful? Why?

Paras 6 and 7. Consider the idea that 'giving' is associated with sacrifice or loss, from the ego's point of view. ACIM has a lot to say about 'sacrifice' in later chapters. What sense of yourself and your relation to the world would you need to have so that giving would not seem like a loss?

Para 8. Think about the attempt (common in religion) of the separate self or ego to 'get in touch with' or 'get help from' a higher source often described as 'spirit'. Can you see how this is an attempt to hold on to the separateness, the self-will?

Para 10: What is meant by 'right-mindedness'?

Para 11: This paragraph is leading us towards the idea that we have only a very limited conception of who we are, and that the ego, which relies on perception, will eventually give way to a sense of Self that does not, and is immortal and stable (see also the first para of the next section. The text was dictated by Jesus in a continuous flow, the section headings being added later by the editors).

Excerpt 5.3. Looking within. T-12.VII.13.

This is a scary little section! Why does the ego want to kill us? What would that prove? What 'crime' does the ego (secretly) fear we have committed? If it seems extreme, think of what would happen to the ego if you came to know your true Self as immortal and independent of the body.

Excerpt 5.4. The Unbelievable belief. T-7.VIII.5-7.

And here's the antidote! We don't have to invest belief in ego/separateness. Perhaps you can think of ideas you used to have about yourself and your limits (or your abilities) that you now see as false? The 'ego' is simply an overall misconception of this kind.

Para 5: 4. What does this sentence mean (recall sections of level 3 - if I feel totally secure, I do not have any desire to attack). Then the next sentences: what 'errors' must we try to root out, (think about the need to control everything), and how does one 'give them over' to the Holy Spirit?

Para 7: a nice statement of what ACIM is about.

Session 6. Alternatives to identification with the ego.

Now we will 'tie up some loose ends' by reading much of the rest of chapter 4. As I suggested in the last session, chapter 4 is a good one for intensive study early in our contact with ACIM, (and chapter 5, which flows on from it, is also quite understandable and very relevant to healing). By contrast, the first 3 chapters of the text are more difficult, so don't be concerned if you don't understand all that is in them - you will find that they gradually yield their meaning when you come back to them later.

Excerpt 6.1. Love without conflict. T-4.III,

Review the Introduction and sections I and II of chapter 4, which we studied in sessions 3 and 5. They describe our true self and worth as 'established by God', and show how our self-constructed egos try to subvert this awareness. Note the last paragraph (#11) of section II: who is the 'you' living in this world? This is the 'ultimate' question for us all; can you see that it is one way of expressing the search for healing? What would be the likely impact on your health of discovering or uncovering your 'true Self'? (Don't just answer that by rote - try to feel how it would be, and answer from that feeling).

Section III, Para 1: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is you'! Think of this in terms of the triangle diagram we have used to describe, in a spatial metaphor, the Whole Mind. 'God' could be seen as at the top, while our small minds are fragments of the Divine, scattered along the base of the triangle. Yet we are an integral part, and have potential access to the whole - in other words, we can choose to locate ourselves anywhere within the triangle, and the higher the better! We are also being told here that we (our spirits) create, much as God creates: awesome!!

Paras 3 and 4: Contrast the very limited sense of self that comes from identifying with ego. What stops you from allowing 'love to enter immediately into your mind'? What is the 'ambivalence'? How does the 'drive to get' contribute to this?

Para 6: How does it feel to be not some impotent pawn, as certain religious traditions describe us, but a being whose will is as free as that of God? (see also IV.7). What might be the responsibilities associated with such freedom?

Paras 7-9: consider that we already have everything, but are obscuring this realization with the demands of our egos. Experiment with making 'a single unequivocal call' (para7, sentence 10), and note any ideas that surface to prevent your doing so.

Excerpt 6.2. This need not be. T-4.IV.

This section describes a 'barometer', the state of our body and its associated brain-mind, that we can use to assess whether or not we are spiritually connected. We have 'chosen rightly' when we are joyous, and wrongly when we aren't. Draw a pie chart to show the proportion of time you are joyous versus not so. Try the question from para 2: "Think honestly what you have thought that God would not have thought" (In other words compare what thoughts might be like at the bottom of the triangle, and at the top). Can you see how we try to

combat anxiety and sadness at the level of ego, i.e. we examine and try to drop specific anxious thoughts, which has some value, while ACIM offers a solution at a much higher level - simply shifting our identification from the ego to the Higher Self. Reflect and comment on this, and also on how this might apply to physical healing.

'Voluntary dispiriting', we are told, need not be. Para 7 explains why we do it, because we don't believe we are worth the effort! Examine this idea as it applies to you.

Contrast the popular view of a possible 'Second Coming of Christ' with the explanation given here (para 10). Why do people seek a tangible prophet? What would be society's likely reaction to the emergence of such a person?

Excerpt 6.3. The ego-body illusion. T-4.V.

Paras 1- 4 describe how we turn to the body for our identification. What are the disadvantages of this strategy? Can you find a way to honour and enjoy your body without thinking of it as 'who I am'?

Paras 5 and 6 are a call to defining purpose in our lives, if we want to live them in an 'intentional' (i.e. spiritual) way. What is your main purpose in life? Are you giving the pursuit of that top priority in terms of time and effort?

Excerpt 6.4. Creation and communication. T-4.VII.

This section completes the chapter; you will recall studying section VI in our session 5. Section VII introduces the idea that our primary function is not to take up space as material bodies, but to be communication centres. Perhaps we could see ourselves as a 'repeater' stations in the cosmos, designed to promulgate the Divine Awareness everywhere? 'Being ... is a state in which the mind is in communication with everything that is real'.

If you want to ponder this further, ask yourself what does that mean to you? Try to feel it, don't intellectualise about it!.

What does it mean 'to be wholly helpful'? Explain (to your own satisfaction) why this involves being 'wholly harmless'.

You may wish to read on into chapter 5 (recalling that we studied section II in our sessions 1 and 2). The very first sentence is an eye-opener! Try turning it around. May I also draw your attention to III.8, and to the beautiful passage in IV.8. The idea that 'the ego is quite literally a fearful thought' (section V.3) is worth thinking about also.

Session 7. I am not guilty and need not 'attack' others, or myself.

Let's look more deeply into our tendency to 'attack', that is blame or judge or condemn, both others and ourselves. You will recall that this was a major theme in HJ level 3.

Excerpt 7.1. W.22, 23, 26.

Many ideas are more simply expressed in the workbook than in the 'Text', so we will look at some thoughts about attack here: I hope that dipping into it like this may serve to familiarise you with the workbook, and perhaps to interest you in beginning to go through it daily, starting at lesson 1.

L.22, paras 1 and 2: When we are angry (i.e frustrated by not getting what we want) we blame and judge others. Can you see that you also, inevitably, 'project' this on to the world, i.e. you expect others to be angry and judgmental towards you? This 'vicious circle' promotes fear.

L.23. Ponder the title affirmation. Try to sense how it would feel if you did not attack (judge, resist) anything (write about it). Now see how ACIM takes this idea to its logical conclusion - far beyond what regular psychology understands. Our thoughts, which are mainly attacks (wanting things to be a certain way, which is usually different from how they appear to be!) actually create our material world! What would be the opposite to 'attacking'? Can you sense the identity between attacking and being attacked (see the last paragraph)? How might dropping attack relate to your healing?

If you want a bit more on this, read lesson 26.

Excerpt 7.2 The ego's use of guilt. T-5.V.

We will examine this section very closely; note how, if you go through it many times, sentence by sentence, a richness of meaning emerges that would not be evident on a rapid perusal.

Para 1: an invitation to look at the ego's 'logic' on guilt.

Para 8 (read next): We are told again that the mind makes our 'future', and that our guilt comes from separation (explain). Further by accepting the Atonement (meaning?), we can 'turn back to full creation'. Might this mean that we can re-write the script of our lives, so to speak? Does it mean we can change what we may be experiencing physically (write your own understanding of this)?

Paras 2 and 3: Separating from the Divine is, essentially, mounting an attack on It; hence we expect to be attacked in turn. Can you think of examples from your own life where this reciprocity between attacking or blaming and being blamed has occurred? Note the definition here of ego (a 'fearful thought')!

Para 4: The antidote to guilt is?

Para 5: Explore that first sentence: 'the guiltless mind cannot suffer'. As with all such profound statements in ACIM, we need to turn it over and over in our minds, and to relate it to our own experience, in order to understand and benefit from it. Then JC goes on to provide one way of understanding illness. A solution to illness is implied - explain.

[if you want to follow up on the relationship between healing of illness and release from guilt, try the Manual for Teachers, section 5 (p17 in the second edition). I won't pose questions about it here, but we will come back to it in later sessions].

Paras 6 and 7: Watch your mind for a while to examine the truth of the assertion that you are deciding what you want every second (write about it). These 2 paras continue to amplify the path to dropping guilt, and the logic of doing so. You might like to summarise this. What is 'true thought'?

Excerpt 7.3. The inheritance of God's son. T-11.IV.5, 6.

How do you understand the statement: "you cannot enter God's presence if you attack His Son"? What about self-blame?

Excerpt 7.4 The guiltless world. T-13.Intro, I.

This chapter pursues the central issue of our guilt, and relates it to our sense of time and of our separation from others.

Intro, para 1: 'If you did not feel guilty you could not attack'. Again, it is vital to establish the truth of this for oneself, by manipulating our guilt in the imagination (i.e. imagining it diminished), and noting what that does to the desire to blame or judge.

Paras 2 and 3: This text addresses the often-raised objection: 'How could God make a world like this?', and explains how and why this punitive environment was in fact created by us to serve our own ego needs.

Para 4: reiterates the way out.

For the keen student, a few more things to consider:

Para 1: "love and guilt cannot co-exist" - comments?

Para 3: "You are not guiltless in time, but in eternity". What does this mean?

Para 8: "You can hold on to the past only through guilt". (And vice versa?).

There are at least two interesting new ideas in this section: the inter-relation of guilt and time; and the idea that ceasing to attack (and therefore not being attacked) is equivalent to understanding our oneness with all.

Session 8. Replacing 'attack' with forgiveness.

More about the central theme that there is no need to attack others or oneself, or even to see oneself as being attacked (and hence to be defensive).

Excerpt 8.1. 'Forgiveness is my function...' W-62, 63.

L.62: How will forgiveness 'let you recognize the light in which you see' - what does this mean? How is it relevant to discovering (uncovering) your identity? What is the relationship of forgiveness to acceptance? What do you find hard to accept? Reflect on this for some time, and write about it.

L.63: This lesson is telling us about our role - nothing less than 'saving' the world! Not through activism, but through cultivating peace in our own minds. How do you understand this section?

Excerpt 8.2. Beyond perception. T-3.V.

Note the rather specific use of some terms here, in a slightly different way from normal worldly usage, e.g. 'creative'.

Para 6: Why is 'the only meaningful prayer ... for forgiveness'?

Para 9: 'Forgiveness is the healing of the perception of separation'. How do you understand this? (As with all these profound sayings, we need to explore actively; this could be done by thinking about where we are separated - from others, from ourselves - and imagining what it would be like to be less so).

Excerpt 8.3. The message of the crucifixion. T-6.Intro, I.

This section discusses the crucifixion, and corrects some of the interpretations that have grown up around the biblical account. More important for our purposes, it discusses how we choose to 'crucify' ourselves. We have already seen what we do to ourselves by our reaction to events; this is the domain of 'stress management', learning to react less. Now we see that it is unnecessary even to defend ourselves against apparent persecution by others, and that if we do, we are, in effect, attacking back.

Section I is long and a bit confusing in parts: I would suggest reading it without worrying too much if you can't grasp it all. Then come back to the Introduction to chapter 6, and read that, and section I paragraphs 1 - 4 more carefully. How are we asked to respond to attack? try to find within a way of not needing to defend yourself. Can you imagine that? What changes would that require, i.e. what would your own view of reality need to become - how might you learn to see the 'Whole' (or God, or the Divine), the material world, and yourself?

Excerpt 8.4. The judgment of the Holy Spirit. T-12.I.

This section follows on nicely from the argument in the last (we're cruising towards sainthood here!). We learn that attack is really a cry for help! Imagine that - it doesn't usually feel like it does it? . Likewise, responding to a cry for help is said to be responding to our own needs (para 7). It appears that every action really goes both ways, towards others and towards ourselves: 'giving is receiving'.

I would suggest the same approach as for the last excerpt: reading through the whole section, then returning to the first 4 paragraphs for more detailed study. In what way might attacks be a call for help? Look at others who appear to 'attack' or inconvenience or disempower you (maybe in subtle or indirect ways). Now try to see in a different light all the ways in which you have described these and similar matters to yourself, probably for decades.

You might like to consider para 6 also: 'gratitude' to our fellow man?? What does that mean? What is the relevance of all this to healing?

Excerpt 8.5. Your function in the atonement. T-14.IV.3.

Takes things a little further still, and connects with Lessons 62 and 63 from the Workbook. Our function is to accept the guiltlessness of our sisters and brothers, and of ourselves. 'On earth this is your only function' (para 3). *Can you see how achieving it would solve all problems?*

Session 9. Alternatives to 'guilt'.

Excerpt 9.1. Dealing with 'magic' thoughts. M.17.4, 5. (Manual for Teachers, section 17).

At the heart of ACIM's teachings is the relationship between 'sin', guilt and anger.

Consider the following sequence, relatively familiar by now:

- We feel guilt because we have separated ourselves from the Divine Mind.
- Believing ourselves to be guilty and separate, we will attempt to manipulate the external world to protect and support ourselves, and will be inevitably and continuously dissatisfied with the result.
- This frustration is expressed as anger.

Can you see how anger is dependent on guilt? If you were free of guilt, could you be angry (try it in imagination)? What is meant by the first 2 sentences in para 4? What kind of broad 'interpretation' is JC referring to here?

'Magic' is the opposite of a miracle, i.e. it is any power except the Will of God, and so refers to our expectation that material remedies, other people, or our worldly selves, can heal or indeed accomplish anything real at all.

Read the rest of #17. What resolution does ACIM advocate? Can you reconcile this with continuing to live a 'happy dream' here in the world?

Excerpt 9.2. Referring decisions to the Holy Spirit. M.29.3.

This paragraph gives us answers to the problem of what to do in the world. Everyone has to consider this in their own way and reconcile it with their need to control events in this life. *How do you see yourself functioning in the world yet acknowledging the Divine? How do you see the role of the ordinary, worldly, decision-making sense of self on which we have all relied for so long? How can you approach your life and your healing with this newer understanding?*

Excerpt 9.3. "Let me remember that there is no sin". L.259.

An example of the later workbook lessons, which bears on the question we have been discussing. Let's take it one step further:

ACIM often points out that we 'fear love'. What kind of love is being referred to, and why do we fear it?

Excerpt 9.5. "The Hero of the dream". T-27.VIII.

The first 9 paragraphs of this section are a gentle ridiculing of the worldly idea which might be stated: "I am, first and foremost, a body, and everything revolves around that fact!"

Para 4: What does He mean by "thus are you not the dreamer, but the dream"? (Don't

let that one zip by: it needs a lot of digesting!)

Para 6: This is as close as ACIM comes to answering the question that occurs to all students eventually, namely why did this split (away from the Divine Mind) ever occur in the first place? Presumably, we are not yet in a position to understand it fully.

Paras 10 - 13: Note that ACIM is not saying 'you caused your illness' in the sense that a naive New Age prophet or a psychosomatic physician might mean it. It is not focussed on whether you smoked too much, or had bad genes, or were damning yourself by some unrecognized attitude to life. What then does ACIM mean by 'you are doing this unto yourself'? And what is the antidote, the healing process? (This is obviously a question of key, practical importance to us, and one that deserves a lot of thought. The answers are here. If you can't make sense of it alone, make sure you get satisfaction from the class discussions.)

Session 10. To love others (unconditionally) is to love ourselves is to heal ourselves.

Excerpt 10.1. The way to remember God. T-12.II.

We previously studied section I of this chapter. It would be valuable to review your notes and re-read the section; recall that it described all 'attack' as a cry for help, or in other words, an appeal for love. Further, in recognizing this in others, we see it in ourselves. In reacting to others with love we receive it ourselves: we replace our 'dream of separation with the fact of unity'.

This second section continues to develop the understanding that what we give to others is given to ourselves.

Para 1. Tells us we heal ourselves by loving ourselves, and by knowing the truth about ourselves. In practical terms, we must 'deny the denial of truth'. Why does JC put it this way, as a double negative, instead of simply saying 'accept truth'? Experiment with both ways of considering this call to action - which provides a better guide, and why?

Paras 2 and 3. Amplifies the idea that what we give to others we give to ourselves - JC makes no distinction. So by loving others unconditionally, we love ourselves and therefore heal ourselves. It thus becomes very important to consider any resentments you may be holding against any other persons. Examine this (especially in your most important relationships). List resentments. Can you see how you might drop them? Consider how you may 'deny your denial' of love for them.

Para 4. Points out that we block our healing by clinging to the fallacy that we already understand (this is perhaps the major misconception that prevents people getting far with their healing work). We are all invested in our view of the world and of 'reality'. What do you fear might happen if you admit 'I don't understand anything'? Can you find a positive way to look at such an admission, such as 'I am opening to a whole new understanding...'?

Paras 5 - 10 are a beautiful reassurance that yes, we can do it!

Excerpt 10.2. The fear of redemption. T-13.III.

This is a section that strikes at the heart of our resistance to change and growth. Try to feel your way into it - academic understanding here won't take us far. Para 4 is a good initial summary. Then in para 2: can you find a fear of God/the Divine? Why do you fear It? Can you find in yourself a 'savage wish to kill God's Son'? How does attack protect you from Heaven, which you may see as personal obliteration, or do you?

Para 3: Is it in fact harder to say (and mean) 'I love' than 'I hate'? Try it out in reference to other people, and to the Divine (in a meditative state).

Paras 6 and 7 point to the need for honest, total self-examination (cf our last excerpt). Para 8 reiterates that we can find our true nature in our brothers as in ourselves - we can work at it in either way. 'One spot of fear' will block love (para 9).

Paras 10 - 12 introduce an idea that is thoroughly discussed throughout most of the second half of the text: how our wish to be 'special' separates us. We will do more on this later, but for now examine your need to be special. Can you see the consequences of this (in spiritual terms of course)?

Excerpt 10.3. The circle of atonement. T-14.V.3.

Para 3 repeats one of the ideas we have been considering: our function is to devote ourselves to the denial of guilt. What is your function here (in less abstract terms? Think of this mainly in terms of your desired state of mind; be specific, i.e. go beyond obvious statements like 'I want peace').

Excerpt 10.4. The Fear of healing. T-27.II.

As you will have noticed by now, there is a lot of repetition in ACIM. So this section, near the end of the text, is reiterating ideas we have already encountered, in a slightly different way. Nevertheless, it is a valuable review, and relates much of what we have been studying to the promotion of healing. Consider especially the following:

- *Para 2: the unhealed cannot pardon*
- *Para 3: no one in whom true forgiveness rests can suffer.*
- *Para 4: Let yourself be healed that you may be forgiving, offering salvation to your brother and yourself.*
- *Para 5: a broken body shows the mind has not been healed.*
- *Para 7: Your health is a result of your desire to see your brother with no blood upon his hands, nor guilt upon his heart....*
- *Para 8: The 'cost' of your serenity is his.*
- *Para 10: Correction is not your function*