

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® CE Text, Chapter 1

Miracle Principles 47 - 48:8

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary. See also the note there on the effects of switching from the FIP edition to the Complete and Annotated Edition.

Please note that the FIP and CE versions may differ in where paragraph breaks occur.

Overview

The next principle discusses the relationship between miracles and time, and the way that miracles save us time while still remaining in the temporal framework. The general idea is that miracles shorten the time it will take us to reach complete awakening.

Principle 47

47. The miracle is a learning device which lessens the need for time.

² In the longitudinal (or horizontal) plane, the true equality of all the members of the Sonship appears to involve almost endless time. ³But we know that time is only an artifact introduced as a learning aid. ¹ ³The sudden shift from horizontal to vertical perception which the miracle entails introduces an interval from which the doer and the receiver both emerge much farther along in time than they would otherwise have been. ⁴A miracle has thus the unique property of abolishing time by rendering the space of time it occupies unnecessary. ⁵There is no relation between the time a miracle *takes* and the time it *covers*. ⁶It substitutes for learning that might have taken thousands of years. ⁷It does this by the underlying recognition of perfect equality and holiness between doer and receiver on which the miracle rests.

In prior discussion we have encountered the illustration that time is like a horizontal plane, while our degree of union with God can be represented by a vertical plane. Nearly everyone who is on a spiritual path has had the feeling, at times, that reaching full union with the divine “appears to involve almost endless time” (2:1). We find ourselves wondering if we’ll ever “get there.” Jesus is about to offer us some explanation and hope.

¹ T-1.15.1:2-3: “Time was made so you could use it creatively, and convince yourself of your own ability to create. Time is a teaching device, and a means to an end.”

First, he reminds us that time isn't anything we need to take seriously. It's just "an artifact introduced as a learning aid" (2:2). Back in Principle 15 he told us that time is actually a gift from God, granting us "space" to convince ourselves of our ability to create. In time, we can channel miracles and learn of our own divinity. Time's purpose is to aid us in waking up. Time is temporary (no pun intended).

The key to making proper use of time is learning to listen to our inner guidance. Back in Principle 21 we were told that we need to distinguish between goals that originate from our physical existence and those that are spiritual, and to follow the right "involuntary guide" for achieving them. That is another way of describing the need to distinguish miracle impulses from sexual or physical ones. Looking back at that passage (particularly T-1.21.3), I'm struck now by how it asserts that "all depression and all fear and embarrassment ultimately stem from this confusion." It is that inner awareness given to us by God that enables us to "use the temporary expedient of time usefully" (T-21.3:3).

When we perform a miracle (an expression of love, a recognition of perfect equality) we have shifted from horizontal perception, seeing things in terms of time, to the vertical perception (recognition of our equality as God's *eternal* creations). When this occurs both the giver and receiver of the miracle experience a quantum leap through time (2:3). A miracle may occupy only a few seconds of time and yet save us *years* or even multiple lifetimes (2:4–6). What could have taken us thousands of years to learn has been grasped in a holy instant! The amazing transformative power of miracles rests in "the underlying recognition of perfect quality and holiness between doer and receiver" (2:7).

3 The miracle is unstable, but perfectly consistent. ²That is, it does not occur predictably across time, and it rarely recurs in comparable forms, but within itself it is perfectly consistent. ³Since it contains nothing but an acknowledgment of equality and worth, all parts *are* equal.²

The use of the word "unstable" to describe a miracle appears odd at first. What it means is that a miracle doesn't appear predictably (in terms of time), and rarely in the same forms (3:1–2). Nevertheless, the miracle is "perfectly consistent...within itself." Regardless of the form it takes, a miracle is always "an acknowledgment of equality and worth" (3:3). Miracles always demonstrate and express the equality and worthiness of giver and receiver.

² "All parts" refers to all examples of the phenomenon of miracles—all miracles. It helps to read the "it" in this sentence and the preceding two as "the phenomenon of miracles." Thus, the phenomenon itself is *unstable*—occurring unpredictably and in ever new forms—but perfectly *consistent*, in that all parts of it—all miracles—contain the same thing: "nothing but an acknowledgment of equality and worth."

4 We said before that the miracle abolishes time.³ ²It does this by a process of collapsing it. ³It thus abolishes certain intervals within it. ⁴It does this, however, *within* the larger temporal sequence. ⁵The validity of the miracle, then, is predictive, not logical, within the temporal schema.⁴ ⁶It establishes an out-of-pattern time interval, which is not under the usual laws of time. ⁷Only in this sense is it timeless. ⁸By collapsing time, it literally saves time, much the way “daylight saving time” does. ⁹It rearranges the distribution of light.⁵

In 47:2, we saw how a miracle can take us on a quantum leap through time. That is the sense in which it “abolishes” time; it *collapses* time; it abolishes “certain intervals within it” (4:2–4). Yet these leaps through time occur “*within* the larger temporal sequence” (4:5). To me, this seems to be saying that while my own progress towards the ultimate goal may leap forward by thousands of years, it does not mean that I will suddenly jump from 2024 to 2334! I’ll still be in 2024, but I will have shortened the time I have to *spend in time*. My personal journey through time (and that of the miracle recipient, I believe) will be shorter, but the overall temporal sequence won’t be affected. The miracle has injected “an out-of-pattern time interval” (4:6), something not under time’s usual laws, into the usual passage of time. This allows us to make better use of the time we spend here, and progress more quickly to our goal. (Robert’s footnote to 4:5 gives a longer explanation based on psychological and logical terms used here, but seems to arrive at a similar conclusion. See his footnote about Sentence 4:9 for a good explanation of the Daylight Saving Time” comparison.)

³ T-1.13.1:1-2: “A miracle is a beginning and an ending. It thus abolishes time.”

⁴ To say that the miracle’s validity is predictive, not logical, strikingly combines two entirely different kinds of validity, one from psychological testing and one from logic. *Predictive validity* is when a test accurately predicts future behavior, such as when a test given to a job applicant accurately predicts how well that applicant will actually perform in the first year on the job. *Logical validity* is when a conclusion follows from its premises, is the logical outcome of its premises. The point of Jesus’ comment here is that the miracle establishes a condition that does *not* follow logically from past conditions. It is new. It is “out-of-pattern.” This condition, however, *does* carry forward into the future; it *does* predict future behavior. These two contrasting kinds of validity, then, encapsulate the miracle’s relationship with time. Rather than being an outcome of the *old* pattern from the past (logical validity), the miracle establishes a *new* pattern that carries into the future (predictive validity). As the Course often points out, the miracle undoes the past and gives rise to a new a new future.

⁵ The purpose of daylight saving time is to save summer daylight from being wasted. It does this by shifting daylight from the early morning hours, when we are asleep, to the afternoon and evening, when the daylight can be used for outdoor activities. As a result, more gets accomplished in the same twenty-four hour period. The daylight is used, rather than slept away, wasted. This mirrors the point being made here, that miracles bring in the light, which results in more getting accomplished—more progress being made—in the same amount of time. Time is thus used to the fullest, rather than wasted.

48. The miracle is the only device which you have at your immediate disposal for controlling time. ²Only revelation transcends it, having nothing to do with time at all.

We continue with the topic of miracles and time.

Because of the way they can “collapse” time, miracles give us control over time. If you have ever felt that you had no control over your time (as I have), this is welcome news. We can relate to the song lyrics, “Time keeps on slippin', slippin', slippin' into the future.” Miracles, in fact, are the *only* way we have any control over time! No wonder we have felt that time was out of our control. Apart from miracles, it is. Having some sense of control over time is yet another way they can bring us more inner peace. In fact, making use of miracles is all that time is for (see T-2.VI.7:1–2).

Revelation is greater than the miracle because it is completely outside of time. As we've seen, while a miracle is always inter-personal, revelation is a personal direct communion with God. (T-28.6:1–2). Revelation has no connection whatsoever to time. They can be instantaneous, or they may seem to last hours. If “transcends it” refers to revelation's transcending the *miracle*, that would imply that revelation's power at controlling time is greater than the miracle's power. But that can't be right if revelation has nothing to do with time. So it must mean that revelation transcends *time*. Time has no effect on revelation, and revelation has no effect on time. Rather, revelation involves communication with *eternity*.

² The miracle is much like the body, in that both are learning aids which aim at facilitating a state in which they are unnecessary. ³When you are finally in the original state of direct communication, neither the body nor the miracle serves any purpose.

Paragraph 2 sheds some light, I think, on the contrast between miracles and revelations. Sentence 1 refers to the miracle. Miracles, like our bodies, serve as aids to help us arrive at “a state in which they are unnecessary.” That state might be considered as a permanent revelation, a state of direct communication with God. Sentence 2 refers to revelation, which is our ultimate and original state of direct communication with God. Revelations are holy instants in which we temporarily plug in to that state of divine communion.

³ While you are in the body, however, you can choose between loveless or miraculous channels of creativity. ²You can make an empty shell (see previous reference),⁶ but you do not make nothing at all. ³You can wait, delay, paralyze yourself, reduce your creativity almost to nothing, and even induce a real developmental arrest or regression. ⁴But you *cannot* abolish your creativity. ⁵You can destroy your medium of communication, but not your potential. ⁶You were *not* created by your own free will. ⁷Only what you make is yours to decide.

⁶ T-1.33.3:2: “If a mind expresses without love, it can make an empty shell.”

We are currently in our bodies; that's obvious. We are *not* in a state where bodies and miracles are unnecessary. We're in a classroom learning to recognize the truth of our holy nature, and we need the learning tools of bodies and miracles. Our lessons consist of a series of choices "between loveless or miraculous channels of creativity"(3:1). We are always choosing one or the other. "You do *not* make nothing at all" (3:2). As the Course makes clear elsewhere, loveless channels *make* illusory things (not create), and miraculous channels *create* real things. It is the same power of our minds used improperly or properly. As we read in T-1.33.3:2, we can "make an empty shell," but we are always making something. Our choice is to make (create) something *real* by expressing love or to make an empty shell by expressing lovelessness.

We can really mess up! Let's take another look at the third sentence: "You can wait, delay, paralyze yourself, reduce your creativity almost to nothing, and even induce a real developmental arrest or regression." It sounds terrible, doesn't it? Delayed, paralyzed, going backward - it's not a good feeling. But, as it says in the very next line, "...you cannot abolish your creativity" (3:4). Hallelujah! I believe that "destroy your medium of communication" refers to the destruction of our bodies, but even that cannot erase our potential for true creation. Our very being was created by God, not by us! All we can do is decide what we want to do with it.

4 The basic decision of the miracle-minded is not to wait on time any longer than is necessary. ²Time can waste, as well as be wasted. ³The miracle worker therefore accepts the time-control factor of the miracle gladly, because he knows that every collapse of time brings everyone closer to the ultimate release from time, in which the Son and the Father are one, or of one kind. ⁴The real meaning of "of one kind" is "of one mind or will."⁷ ⁵When the will of the Sonship and the Father are one, Their perfect accord *is* Heaven.

Our basic decision is to get off our butts—to stop waiting on time any longer than necessary. When we waste time *we too* get "wasted," drained of energy, weary of the journey. We should welcome the collapse of time that miracles bring and gladly extend miracles whenever possible. We shorten time not only for ourselves but also for our brothers and sisters. We are all part of the Sonship and we move the entire Sonship closer to "the ultimate release from time, in which the Son and the Father are one" (4:3). Notice how carefully Jesus qualified that last phrase by adding, "or of one kind." As I pointed out earlier, the Course does not teach that we are one with God in the sense of being identical to God, but we are of one *kind*, identical in mind or will (4:4). When that ultimate oneness of kind—one shared will—has been restored, that is Heaven.

⁷ T-1.46.18:1, 4: "This appears to contradict another statement: 'I and my Father are one'Actually, the original statement was 'are of one kind.'"

5 Equality does not imply homogeneity *now*.⁸ ²When everyone has everything, individual contributions to the Sonship will no longer be necessary. ³When the Atonement has been completed, all talents will be shared by all of the Sons of God. ⁴God is *not* partial. ⁵All of His children have His total love, and all of His gifts are given freely to everyone alike. ⁶“Except you become as little children”⁹ means unless you fully recognize your complete dependence on God, you cannot know the real power of the Son in his true relationship with the Father.

Recognizing our equality with another person does not imply that we are identical—at least *not now*. Jesus uses the word “homogeneity,” which means being identical or uniform. We all have differing qualities or talents. Some are good at teaching; others are healers, and others are comforters. As the Apostle Paul wrote: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6, ESV) One day, when the Atonement has been completed, it seems that all of us will have all the gifts as well (5:3). God doesn’t play favorites (5:4). He loves each of us completely and gives all His gifts freely to everyone.

In 5:6, Jesus reinterprets another Bible verse: Matthew 18:3. The verse in the KJV states that unless we become as little children we cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven, which sounds very strict and judgmental, as if we’ll go to hell if we don’t do it. Apparently, that isn’t what was meant. Jesus says it “means unless you fully recognize your complete dependence on God, you cannot know the real power of the Son in his true relationship with the Father” (5:6). Coming in this discussion of talents, I understand this as saying that to the degree we recognize our dependence on God we will share in the gifts He has to offer to all of us. This is why we each have our individual contributions, our special talents as he calls them in 6:1, to offer to the Sonship.

⁸ In other words, just because we are ultimately equal does not mean that we have the same talents and make the same contributions to the Atonement *now*. In Heaven, however, we *will* have the exact same strengths, because God gives literally everything to each of His Sons.

⁹ Matthew 18:3 (NKJV): “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”

6 You do have special talents which are needed for the celestial speed-up at this time.¹⁰ ²But note that the term “speed-up” is not one which relates to the *transcending* of time. ³When time is abolished and all the Sons of God have come home, no special agents will be necessary. ⁴But do not underestimate the power of special agents now, or the great need there is for them. ⁵I do not claim to be more than that myself. ⁶No one in his right mind (a term which should be specially noted) ever wants either more or less than that. ⁷Those who are called on to witness for me *now* are witnessing for all men, as I am.¹¹

These special talents are needed to bring about the desired shortening of time (“celestial speed-up”). Notice the footnote explaining this term. This isn’t about *transcending* time, but *collapsing* it, or hastening the collective process of awakening the entire Sonship. When time has been transcended, special agents won’t be needed. Now, there *is* a *great* need for them. Jesus openly says that he is just one of the special agents, nothing more than any of us might be as we realize our total dependence on God. Being a special agent is all anyone ever wants to be if they are in their right mind! And he means “right mind” in a special sense. It means a mind free of illusions, seeing things with true perception. It is the mind of one who bears witness, not on behalf of themselves, but on behalf of all men, seeing them as their equals—as Jesus sees us (6:7).

7 Fantasies are distorted forms of thinking, because they always involve twisting perception into unreality. ²Fantasy is a debased form of vision. ³Visions and revelations are closely related. ⁴Fantasies and projection are more closely associated, because both attempt to control external reality according to false internal needs. ⁵“Live and let live” happens to be a very meaningful injunction.¹² ⁶Twist reality in any way and you are perceiving destructively. ⁷Reality was lost through usurpation, which in turn produced tyranny. ⁸Now you must choose freely to devote your heritage to the greater restoration. ⁹As long as a single slave remains to walk the earth, your release is not complete. ¹⁰Complete restoration of the Sonship is the only true goal of the miracle-minded.

¹⁰ According to guidance Helen received at the beginning of the Course’s dictation (see Cameo 1), there is a “celestial speed-up” underway. In response to people losing more than they were gaining, “People all over the world were being called on to help, and were making their individual contributions as part of an overall, prearranged plan” (Schucman, Helen Cohn. *Autobiography*. Temecula, CA: Foundation for *A Course in Miracles*, 1990, 2009, p. 41). Their contributions, in other words, are what is speeding up collective progress. The work of Edgar Cayce and *A Course in Miracles* itself were identified as aspects of this speed-up.

¹¹ This appears to be a reference to Acts 22:15 (RSV), where Paul is told, “You will be a witness for him [Jesus] to all men of what you have seen and heard.” In the Course’s allusion, witnessing for Jesus means witnessing for all men, because that is what Jesus does.

¹² Placing “live and let live” in this discussion on fantasy implies that fantasies are a violation of this proverb. Fantasies, in other words, treat others as one’s puppets, rather than just letting them live as they choose.

Now Jesus begins to discuss sexual fantasies, a topic that covers this and the following two paragraphs. In Paragraph 7, he covers fantasies in general, calling them “distorted forms of thinking” (7:1) and “a debased form of vision” (7:2). Fantasies twist perception into unreality. We are not satisfied with reality; we want to twist it to suit our wishes. They are actually closely related to *projection*. As we have seen, projection takes something in ourselves we do not like and projects it onto someone else. We see them, not as they are, but as we wish to see them. Fantasies are doing the same thing. They are imagining external reality to be something it is not in order to fill some imagined internal need (7:4).

Whether we twist reality in the external world or within our imagination we are “perceiving destructively” (7:6). Therefore, the saying, “Live and let live,” is very meaningful, good advice! If you are fantasizing about another person (sexually or otherwise) you are wishing them to be or do something they are not or do not wish to do. To put it mildly, this is quite disrespectful! In fact, you are expressing a wish to usurp their will, which is exactly how reality was lost in the first place, and ended up producing tyranny. We are deeply disturbed by a presidential candidate who has expressed a desire to be a dictator, but when we fantasize, we are engaged in a very similar mental activity!

What we need to do is to “choose freely to devote your heritage to the greater restoration,” that is, giving full liberty to every person, even in your imagination. I love the line, “As long as a single slave remains to walk the earth, your release is not complete” (7:9). Who are *you* enslaving in your thoughts? Who can you set free? I need to continually remind myself that what affects my brother or sister affects me. If they are enslaved, I am not free, because they are a part of me. Our goal must always be the complete restoration of the Sonship (7:10).

8 Sexual fantasies are distortions of perception by definition. ²They are a means of making false associations and obtaining pleasure from them. ³You can do this only because *you are* creative. ⁴But although you can perceive false associations, you can never make them real except to yourself. ⁵As we said before, you believe in what you make or create.¹³ ⁶If you make a miracle, you will be equally strong in your belief in that. ⁷The strength of your conviction will then sustain the belief of the miracle receiver.

Zeroing in now on sexual fantasies, he points out that they “are distortions of perception by definition” (8:1). Of course, they are. We are misusing our creative powers to make false associations to obtain pleasure for ourselves. But you can’t make them real except to yourself. That’s making, not creating, but we *believe* in what we make or create (8:5). We can learn from this that if we offer a miracle instead of a fantasy, our belief in it will be equally strong—strong enough to uphold “the belief of the miracle receiver” (8:7). What I like about that flow of thought is that he does not dwell on the negative aspects of fantasy. Instead, he draws a positive lesson from it.

¹³ T-1.12.1:5: “And we believe in what we make or create.”

9 No fantasies, sexual or otherwise, are true. ²Fantasies become totally unnecessary as the wholly satisfying nature of reality becomes apparent. ³The sex impulse is a miracle impulse when it is in proper focus. ⁴One individual sees in another the right partner for propagating the species and also for their joint establishment of a creative home. ⁵This does not involve fantasy at all. ⁶If I am asked to participate in the decision, the decision will be a right one, too.¹⁴

Fantasies are fantasies! They are not true in any sense. They don't accomplish anything, and once we realize that reality is "wholly satisfying," we will realize that fantasies are "totally unnecessary" (9:1-2). What if we came to see that reality is wholly satisfying? Can we, and do we, believe that? Because that is what the Course is trying to tell us.

Sexual impulses are not intrinsically wrong; in fact, it "*is* a miracle impulse when it is in proper focus" (9:3). (Just in case you thought Jesus was anti-sex!) What does he mean by "proper focus"? I think Sentence 9:4 is his perfect answer:

"One individual sees in another the right partner for propagating the species and also for their joint establishment of a creative home."

That is what we all truly want in a sexual partner, isn't it? And that is a miracle impulse. There is no fantasy there. And Jesus assures us that we can't possibly make an incorrect choice of a mate if we ask him to "participate in the decision" (9:6).

10 The choice of sex partners often involves a lack of love, and this, whatever happens, must be atoned for.¹⁵ ²They are frequently selected precisely because they are *not* suited to gratify your fantasies. ³This is not because you want to abandon or give up the fantasies, but because you are *afraid* of them. ⁴You see in a partner a means of protecting against the fear, but you then continue to look around for chances to indulge the fantasies. ⁵The dream of the "perfect partner" is an attempt to find *external* integration while retaining conflicting needs in the self. ⁶Some abandon the hope in a neurotic sense of despair of finding that perfect partner. ⁷Others insist the hope is justified. ⁸None is in his right mind.

Far too often, though, our choice of sex partners actually involves a lack of love, and that lack of love has to be "atoned for." That doesn't mean some kind of sacrifice or punishment, though. In general, we atone for a *lack* of love by *giving* love instead. We make up the difference. *How* we do so in such a case is explained in Paragraphs 11 and 12, but we'll get to that in a moment.

First, we look more closely at the wrong way of choosing partners. Weirdly, we sometimes choose a partner specifically because they *don't* fulfill our fantasies (10:2)! That choice isn't made because we want to give up our fantasies. We are actually afraid of our fantasies and choose a

¹⁴ The following three paragraphs come from a response to a question from Bill about "sex under existing conditions."

¹⁵ In the Course, we atone for a lack of love by giving love where before we had given lovelessness. How to do that in this case is explained in the two paragraphs that follow this one.

partner as a kind of protection from them, but then look *outside* the relationship for a way to fulfill the fantasy! We want to think we are *appearing* to be free of the fantasies, but we still secretly indulge them. This rather dreary picture is all too often borne out when we hear accounts of sexual predators and killers. They frequently seem to be “happily married,” with a spouse who has no idea what crimes they’ve been committing outside the marriage.

The final two sentences seem to imply that “finding that perfect partner” is a pipe dream. Jesus says that those who abandon the hope and those who insist it is justified are neither one in his right mind! This is not a general critique of how we select marriage partners. Rather, it refers specifically to partners selected because they *do not* fulfill our loveless sexual fantasies. Whether you think such a “solution” will work or just abandon all hope of ever finding a suitable partner for the purpose, it’s a pipe dream.

What we need to do in such a situation is to find a way of bringing real love back into the loveless situation. That’s the discussion that follows.

11 The lack of love (or faulty need-orientation) which leads to a particular person (*not* object) choice *can* often be corrected within the existing framework.¹⁶ ²The situation is questionable largely because of its inherent vulnerability to fantasy-gratification. ³Doing the best you can *within* this limitation is often the best correction measure. ⁴Any relationship you have undertaken for whatever reasons becomes a responsibility.

How, then, can you begin to correct the lack of love in a situation such as this? Do you leave? Should you stay? In this relationship, someone has chosen a partner to guard against their fantasies, creating a relationship that has an “inherent vulnerability to fantasy-gratification” (11:2). Whatever the reason we enter a relationship, it becomes our responsibility to do the best we can *within* its limitations (11:3–4). The lack of love “*can* often be corrected,” even in such situations (11:1). It is our responsibility to correct any relationship we are in, whatever the reason for entering it (11:4).

12 If you shift your own needs, some amount of corresponding shift in the need-orientation of the other person *must* result. ²This will be beneficial, even if the partner was originally attracted to you *because* of your disrespect.¹⁷ ³Teaching devices which are totally alien to a learner’s perceptual system are usually merely disruptive. ⁴Transfer depends on *some* common elements in the new situation which are understandable in terms of the old.¹⁸

¹⁶ “Within the existing framework” means within the current relationship.

¹⁷ The disrespect appears to be in seeing the person simply as an object whose purpose was to protect you against your sexual fantasies (by not fulfilling them).

¹⁸ In other words, it is all right to stay within the framework of a relationship originally based on disrespect and work on slowly changing it. After all, that framework is what the two partners understand, and people learn best within the framework of what they understand.

Taking responsibility means shifting your own needs (which may even have been quite disrespectful). If you do so, there will be “some amount of corresponding shift” in the other person’s needs (12:1). That shift will be beneficial even if what attracted them to you in the first place was your disrespect (12:2). In fact, the familiar situation is a good environment for learning something different. If the relationship suddenly became completely unrecognizable it would be likely to disrupt the relationship entirely. There have to be “*some* common elements” from the old form of the relationship “in the new situation” in order for the changes to be understandable. We are not expected to shift suddenly to a pure, holy relationship.

13 How can sexual impulses be directly translated into miracle impulses? ³In a situation where you or another person, or both, experience inappropriate sexual impulses:

1. ³*Know first* that this is an expression of fear. ⁴Your love toward each other is not perfect and this is why the fear arose.
2. ⁵Turn immediately to me by denying the power of the fear, and ask me to help you replace it with love. ⁶This shifts the sexual impulse immediately to the miracle impulse and places it at *my* disposal.
3. ⁷Then acknowledge the true creative worth of both yourself and the other one. ⁸This places strength where it belongs.¹⁹

How, then, do we make such a shift, translating sexual impulses into miracle impulses? The three-step process that follows is the key lesson to get here. If you are in a relationship where one or both parties are experiencing inappropriate sexual impulses, these are the steps for release:

1. Be very clear that these inappropriate impulses are an expression of fear, fear that has arisen because the two of you do not love one another perfectly. It is the *lack of love* that is the problem that causes the fear. You are trying to assuage your fear through these impulses.

2. Turn to Jesus (or the Holy Spirit) by *denying the power of the fear*, and ask Him to help you replace the fear with love. The fear is what led to the sexual impulse, so denying the fear immediately shifts the impulse from a sexual one to a miracle one. You have put your impulse at the disposal of Jesus.

3. Now, accept into your mind the awareness that both of you are beings wholly worthy of love as God’s creations.

As the footnote points out these three steps are twice referred to later in the Text I reproduce those two instance here to drive the point home.

¹⁹ These three steps are meant as an actual practice that we do when we experience “inappropriate sexual impulses.” To emphasize this and make it more useable, we have numbered the steps. This exercise is presented in different form in Chapter 2 (T-2.IX.11-12)—where its steps are numbered in the Urtext—and in Chapter 3 is called “the correction formula for fear” (T-3.V.1:3).

The first corrective step is knowing it *is* fear. ²After taking this step, you might benefit temporarily by adding another step before going on with the corrective process: Try saying to yourself that you must have willed not to love somehow or somewhere, or the fear which arises from behavior-will conflict could not have happened. ³Then follow the previous instructions.²⁰

If you consider what the process really means, it is nothing more than a series of pragmatic steps in the larger process of accepting the Atonement as the remedy. ²From this viewpoint, the steps can be reworded as follows:

1. ³Know first this is fear.
2. ⁴Fear arises from lack of love.
3. ⁵The only remedy for lack of love is perfect love.
4. ⁶Perfect love *is* the Atonement.(T-2.IX.11-12(CE))

The mention in Chapter 3.V simply points back to the earlier one, saying it begins with “know first” and calling it “the correction formula for fear.” In the third step, we supply the missing love when we recognize both parties in the relationship as wholly lovable creations of God.

Clearly, this is a “formula” we should memorize and apply in many different situations.

14 Note that sexual fantasies are *always* destructive (or depleting), in that they perceive another in an inappropriate creative role. ²Both people are perceived essentially as “objects” fulfilling their *own* pleasure drives. ³This dehumanized view is the source of the depleting use of sex.

Sexual fantasies are always destructive because they see both parties as objects, each fulfilling their *own* pleasure drives. Objects are just powerless things, with no humanity. This is why such fantasies are depleting, and end up draining us of energy. True energy comes from the release of *miracle* impulses because they are expressions of our true Self. Remember, the misguided sexual impulses are distortions, through level confusion, of our valid impulses to love and be loved. We are merely *un*-distorting the misguided impulses back into love (see 17:1–2).

²⁰. The “previous instructions” appear to be the exercise given near the end of Chapter 1 (T-1.48.13:3-8): “*Know first* that this is an expression of fear. Your love toward each other is not perfect and this is why the fear arose....Turn immediately to me by denying the power of the fear, and ask me to help you replace it with love....Then acknowledge the true creative worth of both yourself and the other one.”

15 Freud's description is purely *negative*; that is, sex as a release from the unpleasant.²¹ He also observed that the tension from id impulses never completely abates.²¹ What he should have said was that the shift from miracle impulses to sexual impulses was debilitating in the first place, because of the level confusion involved.²² This set up a state in which real release was impossible. Note also that Freud's notion of sex was as a device for inducing *relaxation*, which he confused with *peace*.

If you have studied psychology and Freud, you will probably be interested in what it has to say. For most of us, there are only a couple of points of interest. In Sentence 15:3, the idea is that since the body is not our true identity, nothing physical, such as sex, can possibly release our spirit or mind from anything. A sexual release *can* induce relaxation, but physical relaxation is not inner peace (15:5). The cause of our weakness or infirmity was actually “the shift from miracle impulses to sexual impulses” (15:3). Unless that level confusion is undone, no real release is possible.

16 Inappropriate sex relaxes only in the sense that it may induce physical sleep. The miracle, on the other hand, is an *energizer*. It always strengthens, and never depletes. It *does* induce peace, and by establishing tranquility (not relaxation) it enables both giver and receiver to enter into a state of grace. Here their miracle-mindedness (not release from tension) is restored.

The only way inappropriate sex relaxes us is that it may induce sleep (16:1). Miracles don't make you sleepy, they *energize and strengthen* you (16:2–3). Unlike sexual release, miracles *do* induce peace, and that peace in turn “enables both giver and receiver to enter into a state of grace” (16:4), thus restoring their miracle-mindedness (16:5).

²¹ According to Freud, the pleasure in sex is merely the release of unpleasant tension. This tension comes from the buildup of unexpressed sexual energy (libido). This energy is located in the id, the unconscious repository of primitive, instinctual impulses. Id impulses, in Freud's thought, are instinctual impulses that demand immediate gratification. These especially include impulses of sexuality and aggression.

²² “Level confusion” here means confusing the body with the actual person, who is spirit. If the person is not the body, then how can bodily release produce actual release for the person?

17 Tension is the result of a building up of unexpressed miracle impulses. ²This can be truly abated only by releasing the miracle drive, which has been blocked. ³Converting it to sexual libido merely produces further blocking. ⁴Never foster this illusion in yourself, or encourage it in others. ⁵An “object” is incapable of release, because it is a concept which is devoid of creative power. ⁶The recognition of the real creative power in yourself and others brings release because it brings peace. ⁷The peace of God which passeth understanding *can* keep your hearts now and forever.²³

Why do we build up tension? The answer given here is that tension results from “a building up of unexpressed miracle impulses” (17:1). Who would have thought of that? But it makes sense, if what we are is extensions of God, Who is love. Inability or failure to express our true nature will naturally build up tension. The only way to ease the tension, then, is to release our miracle drive (17:2)!

If you think about how you react to anything that blocks your natural tendencies, you’ll understand this. Suppose you are physically very active by nature but, for some reason, are forced to sit still and quiet in one place for a long time. Tension builds up, doesn’t it? Or suppose you really like peace and quiet but are trapped at a noisy party where everyone is talking all at once. Tension! Going against your nature causes tension, and your nature is love. Blocking the expression of that love is a major cause of tension.

Converting your miracle impulses to sexual libido just adds to the blocking (17:3). Don’t delude yourself or anyone that this might work. Treating another or yourself as a sex object cannot bring release; it has no creative power (17:5). Only releasing your true creative power and that of others by extending a miracle can bring you peace and thus release (17:6). This is the fulfillment of what the Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 4:7 (KJV): “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

²³ Philippians 4:7 (KJV): “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” In the above passage, peace comes from recognizing the creative power in others and ourselves, rather than relating to both as objects.

18 Remember that you who want peace can find it only by complete forgiveness.²⁴
²You never really *wanted* peace before, so there was no point in knowing how to get it.
³This is an example of the “need to know” principle, which was established by the plan of Atonement long before the CIA.²⁵ “No kind of knowledge is acquired by anyone unless he wants it or believes in some way he *needs* it.”

Robert has a footnote to the first sentence that lacks clarity. It is referring to a passage *in the Urtext* that is *not* in the CE. In it, Helen has a question about past memories, and Jesus replies as follows below. Then this paragraph (48.18) occurs. Robert chose to skip Helen’s digression, but added his footnote to give better context to paragraph 18 in this discussion:

HS question re: past memories. ANSWER: As long as you remember ALWAYS that you never suffered anything because of anything that anyone ELSE did, this is not dangerous. Remember that you who want peace can find it only by complete forgiveness. [¶18 continues as above]

If any of you are interested in the Urtext, you can find a complete PDF copy of it online, for free, at this address: <http://www.miraclesinactionpress.com/dthomp74/2008/ETEXTS/UR%207vol%20e-text%20ls.pdf>. I found the passage above by searching for the words “you never suffered anything.”

In other words, if you are thinking about what someone else did “to you” (whether in a past life or this one), believing they caused you pain, you are wrong. And you’ll never find peace until you completely forgive them. That is the only way complete peace is possible.

The remark about “need to know principle” in 18:3 was, I believe, an aside primarily for the benefit of Bill Thetford, who had worked for the CIA at one time.

Before you can find peace, before you even need to know *how* to find peace, you must want it (18:2). This is true of any kind of knowledge (18:4). This is why, early in the Workbook, you work with lessons like, “Above all else I want to see.” Our egos do not want peace. They thrive on conflict. Our egos want us to see ourselves as victims under attack by outside forces, and peace would be inconsistent with such victimhood. They want us to feel that way because, if we didn’t, we would realize that *only we* are responsible for what we see (see T-21.II.2 and T-28.II.12:5-7). Recognizing that we are doing this to ourselves is the first step on the ladder back to Heaven.

²⁴ This follows directly on a comment that it is all right to know about particular past lives “as long as you remember *always* that you never suffered anything because of anything anyone *else* did.” Thinking you suffered at the hands of another is contrary to complete forgiveness, and complete forgiveness is the way to peace.

²⁵ The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is well known for sharing information only on a “need to know” basis. Bill Thetford actually worked for the CIA in the 1950s, where he carried out research, writing, and teaching on the Personality Assessment System, a system for describing and assessing personality (see Cameo 30). He had top secret clearance, so he was very familiar with the CIA’s “need to know” policy.

Legend:

Light underscoring indicates emphasis that appears in the Urtext or shorthand notes.

The Text is taken from the Circle of Atonement's Complete and Annotated Edition (which I refer to as the "CE" for "Complete Edition" or "Circle Edition"). Please be aware that, even when the wording is identical to the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often entirely different in the CE, which restores the paragraph breaks found in the original notes. This results in different reference numbering as well. I will indicate for each paragraph the corresponding sentences in the Foundation for Inner Peace (FIP) edition. You should be able to locate specific sentences in that edition if you need to, with a minimum of visual clutter in the commentary. References to quotations are from the CE unless another version is being quoted, in which case that version is indicated.

Footnotes by the commentary author are shown in this font and size. Other footnotes come from the Complete Edition itself.

Effects of Differing Editions of the Course

There were significant changes made in the CE, although for the most part there was no alteration in the meaning of the text, and the *Manual for Teachers* had far fewer changes. There are some changes in section and paragraph breaks and sentence structure that result in different numbering in references to the same text in the two editions. When there is a major difference I will indicate it with a footnote.

I have attempted for all references to add a separate FIP reference if it differs from the CE reference, but I may have missed some. If so, I apologize. Please let me know of any referencing problems you find.

I have also tried to edit my commentary so as to reflect any wording changes in the CE. For instance, the CE Text restored the plural use of "you" where the FIP had substituted the phrase "you and your brother." One such instance will illustrate the kind of change, significant in actual words but nearly identical in overall meaning:

FIP: Thus you and your brother but shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point you both agreed to keep intact.

CE: You shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point which you had both agreed to keep intact.