

Course Companions Sample Commentary

Volume I - Text

Day 208. “Abandoning the Illusion of Love” (T-16.IV)

This section is truly one of the seminal discussions of special relationships in the Course. I often point out that it contains the Course’s only mention of special hate relationships. When I first started the Course, I heard that special relationships come in two types: special love and special hate. However, I eventually realized that virtually all references to special relationships in the Course are to special love. This includes the terms *special relationship*, *special love relationship*, and *unholy relationship*. All are references to special love—all except the one mention here of the “special hate relationship.” However, this one reference, while anomalous, is extremely important, for it plays a key role in this key discussion of the special relationship.

What Jesus is challenging in this section is the basic structure of our lives. Every one of us has a list of people we really don’t want in our lives. Here is the list as I put it in my commentary on this section for *The Illuminated Text*:

- all your ex-partners that you don’t want to see again
- all your friends who stabbed you in the back, prompting you to move on
- all your former bosses and coworkers that you found unbearable
- all the people you have gladly let drop out of your life
- all the people you never let into your life because you found them objectionable

Now imagine a life in which these are the only people there. When you go to work, when you go to the store, when you walk along the street, when you come home, when you go into the bedroom—wherever you are, these people are literally the only ones there. Can you imagine it? Wouldn’t it be a horrible life? It would be full of hate and it would also be full of *guilt*, for it would be impossible to feel hate with every face you saw without feeling like a terrible person.

What is the solution to this? We know what it is, for we have all implemented it. We gather to ourselves loved ones, build walls between them and the hated ones, and try our very best to conduct our lives with the former and not the latter. That’s what we have all done, isn’t it? That’s the big solution. And when I say “build walls,” I don’t mean that metaphorically. True, a lot of the walls we build are meant to keep out the weather, but a lot of them are mainly meant to keep out the wrong people. Isn’t that the purpose of the walls around our bedroom? And how are the walls of a gated community meant to keep out the *weather*?

This seems like a great solution. Yes, the hated ones are still out there, milling around outside the gate, trying out different codes to see if they can get in. But we are hanging out in here, with the cool people, *inside* the gate. You can probably see why Jesus speaks of trying to “offset” (1:3), “limit” (1:5), and “balance” (1:8) the hate. Given that we can’t just ship the hated ones off the planet, we can hopefully so successfully hole up with our favorite people that the presence of the hate can be shrunk down to an absolute minimum. Indeed, the ideal is for the hated ones to be so out of sight that they are completely out of mind. The goal is to see our life as almost entirely occupied by love, with just tiny traces of hate lingering on the outer perimeter. And isn’t that exactly how we see our lives?

As the first paragraph of this section emphasizes, rather than sweeping all the hate under the rug, we have to look at it full in the face. Indeed, we have to look at this whole setup in which we are using love to balance out hate. Think about it: The love we have for our favorite people implicitly says, “I’m so glad I can hole up with you in our haven, so that you can save me from all those horrible people I hate.” That’s what we call love, but the hate in it is undeniable. So our love is clearly a *hateful love*. And how can we call that love?

Jesus takes one step further with this. Our love for our loved ones does not just contain hate toward the trolls outside the gates. It also contains hate *for the loved ones*. How can that be? To answer that, Jesus points us to the phenomenon of becoming disillusioned. We all know that feeling where we decide that someone wasn’t the wonderful savior we thought he was. When that happens, as it does so frequently, our love turns into disappointment. But if love is not an illusion (4:1), then our so-called love must really have been something else all along, even at its height. Jesus says there is only one option for what it was. “Where disillusionment is possible, there was not love but hate” (4:1).

This underlying hate comes out when the relationship fails. Jesus says that the special love relationship can never succeed in its goal. Its goal is to keep all the hate and all the guilt outside the walls, but it simply can’t pull this off. When that becomes clear to us, when we realize that we are still haunted by the exact same fear and guilt, then we decide this relationship is not what we thought it was. This merchandise is defective. And when we decide that, all the hate that was the real content of the relationship all along comes rushing in (4:10), which means now we have to change the code on the gate yet again!

Do you see what Jesus is asking us to face? We think our lives are pretty much wall-to-wall love, with just little wisps of hate outside the walls. He is asking us to face that our lives are more or less wall-to-wall hate. Hate outside the walls and hate inside the walls.

The problem is not in the people. The problem is in us. We can't solve this by seeking out the right people. *We have to face the hate within.* As Jesus says in one of the Course's most quoted lines, "Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built *against* it" (6:1).

Exercise

Look with unflinching honesty at your relationships, seeking out the hate hidden underneath the illusion of love. Bring to mind instances of special love calling to you right now: illusions of love that you want, fantasies that have been cropping up in your mind. As each instance arises in your mind, say:

This is hate disguised as love. This is my hate, calling to me, asking me to stay. Yet this hate is really my call to God, my call for help. Surely He will answer me, since I am His completion, and since His love has never ceased calling to me.

For reflection

1. How afraid are you to look upon the hatred in your relationship[s] (1:1)? How easy is to think that anything in you that is not totally loving is hatred?
2. What barriers have *you* built within yourself against love? How prepared are you to honestly "seek and find" them (6:1)?
3. Can you relate to the idea of building walls to keep out the hated ones that Robert refers to above? Do any names come to mind?

Suggested practice idea

Jesus, help me seek and find all the barriers I have built within myself against love.

Response to temptation

In this situation, let me answer the call of love and not the call of hate.

This commentary was written by Robert Perry, editor of the Complete and Annotated Edition of A Course in Miracles, for the Course Companions online learning program. Course Companions is offered by the Circle of Atonement and can be found online at coursecompanions.com.