

14 CHOOSING TEACHERS

"There are so many people, Richard, who have rejected one of the most vital parts of their lives—their Spirituality. My observation is that those who do this are usually people who have listened to someone with no practical Spiritual savvy. Years of study and intellectual 'knowledge' about doctrine or religion does not necessarily mean one has any actual Spiritual experience.

"Translations of the Aramaic teachings are so distorted today," I said, "I often wonder if it has been done purposely." I felt some of my own upset at the thought. "The translations appear sound, but are twisted just enough to cover up the wisdom that was available through the original words.

"I am always amazed by people who have studied Greek interpretations, often called translations, of Aramaic teachings yet have no interest in the actual meanings of what they have studied. Without access to the originally intended meanings, which can only be understood through a comprehension of the conceptual framework of the Aramaic mind, it is difficult for people to apply the tools that were originally taught. Sound teachings have gone from being practical and down-to-earth tools to being impractical and unattainable. As a result, people miss out on the knowledge, understanding, healing benefits and comfort provided by the original teachings."

"Why would the teachings be distorted?" Richard inquired.

"There are three possibilities I see. One is that the expression of the ideas could have been limited by the ability of the language into which they were 'translated.' Recall the two-dimensional creature we talked about earlier had no words to express the Truth about the three-dimensional world? A language can only express understanding for which it has words.

"A second possibility is the level of understanding of translators who had little or no actual experience with the transforming power of the teachings. Without realizing it, they watered down this powerful ancient wisdom to their limited capacity. Can you possibly translate something beyond your level of comprehension?"

"I'm not sure what you are saying, michael."

"Let's use an example. Would you want to go to a chemistry lab and perform a complex and dangerous experiment on the instructions of a first year chemistry student who doesn't even know the language of higher chemistry?"

"Of course not, I would want a competent, experienced instructor who KNOWS. I would at least want the input of someone who had actually performed the experiment and had it work," came his emphatic reply.

"Would it be wise to demand the same from the person you choose to assist in your Spiritual process? Would it be equally wise to qualify the person who helps you reach a conclusion about whether such a thing as the Spiritual dimension even exists? Many have never thought of consciously choosing their Spiritual leaders, or considered what the appropriate criteria are for making that choice.

"There are voices in the world that scream, 'There is no Spiritual life!' and 'All religion is a hoax!' It amazes me how many people unthinkingly follow the advice of those voices. Have you ever asked yourself what qualifies them to give you advice? I find the fact that people listen to these voices especially shocking, when I consider that the majority of those advisors are screaming out of their own pain, which tends to render them unconscious. Many tend to listen to those voices and, in succeeding years, when the words of the unqualified echo in their heads, they mistake those thoughts as their own.

"I have never heard anyone who has had a Spiritual experience say such things as 'hoax' or 'there is no Spiritual life.' I have also observed many who have said such things change their minds very quickly when they have an actual Spiritual experience."

"Hmmm. What is the third cause you have in mind when you spoke of reasons for distortion, michael?"

"The third possibility I see is that the teachings were purposely falsified to mislead and control people."

"I see why there is so much conflict, confusion and infighting among Spiritual groups. It sounds like each of us has to take responsibility for our own process, clean up our own mind and choose our teachers wisely." Richard appeared to feel safe enough to explore more about his Spirituality. "As a young man, I dumped all involvement with anything that smacked of Spiritual content as a result of my religious upbringing. I also fell into thinking things would make me happy. Now I'm seeing that no matter how much I have, if I don't work out what is in my own head, possessions alone won't satisfy me or bring me peace, happiness and security."

I agreed. "Things can be nice to have. They can bring comfort, but comfort does not heal," I offered. " Only with tools designed to complete the task, can we heal our pain .

"It seems like seeking out tools is the sensible thing to do. Spirituality has always been the place where healing tools are found. Religious movements based on Spiritual experiences sometimes carry through with that purpose and sometimes go in the opposite direction and attempt to control people by inflicting pain rather than healing it. Where you go for Spiritual advice is important.

"It is interesting to note that people who take the advice of only the best lawyers, who travel the world in search of the top physicians, who want only the soundest of financial advisers, will accept the opinions of those with little or no experience when it comes to

Spiritual matters. Does that make sense when making decisions that could have long-term consequences?"

Richard agreed that confusion is rampant in Spiritual circles. "Where can I go to learn how to make such decisions, michael?"

"It helps to build some brain cells about the ways Spiritual teachings are used in our culture. I think you will find that will clarify the process of choosing."

Two Spiritual Teachers:

"1. True Spiritual teachers use Spiritual teachings to liberate people from their pain and the habits which produce pain and suffering. This style of teaching comes from those who inspire and motivate others by example. They have Spiritual experience and are accomplished in that realm. The fruit, or result, of these teachers' work is a shift from the insanity, hatred and what I like to call little violences of the world to peace, harmony, and abundance. These teachers, while not perfect, focus on their own work. Their hand is always out, compassionately extended for the purpose of supporting anyone who is healing. "2. False teachers use Spiritual teaching deviously. Under the guise of a promise to save or liberate people from present or future pain and suffering, they use threat and fear tactics to drive people deeper into their trauma. Often suffering is promoted as good and necessary and the promise of liberation applies to some sort of an afterlife, which cannot be proven nor disproven. These 'teachers' also have a hand out, but it is gathering for themselves or their organizations and using some form of threat or fear tactic to keep people in tow.

"The false teacher uses religion to acquire political, financial and/or behavioral control over people. The incentive for the weak or insecure to enter this type of religious order and join the ranks of false teachers is evident. A disproportionate percentage of the assets, power, sexual favors and money of the people they control and manage accrues to them."

"Sounds like pretty heavy condemnation, michael. I thought this work was supposed to be positive in its thinking. I don't know if I want to hear this," Richard chided.

"I understand where you are coming from, Richard. If you were in a prison, and did not know it, wouldn't you need to understand something about its structure in order to find your way out? If, from within your prison walls, you said to me, 'michael, I'm a positive thinker. Don't tell me I'm in prison or how I got here. Just show me out.' Wouldn't it be foolish to lead you to the high fence, knowing you'd be stuck there without a ladder?"

"If you had allowed the space for me to tell you about the high fence beforehand, you could have gotten the ladder from the basement in advance. Knowing what we're dealing with can be practical help to us. Planning ahead and being prepared for what we will encounter is sometimes more important than all the positive thinking the world has to offer.

"Showing up at the fence without a ladder is doing life the hard way. I'm here to support you in making life easy and joyful—meeting your challenges with the practical tools and knowledge you need. I support you in meeting the obstacles in life with ladder in hand—that is, living life from an empowered state."

"I'm willing to have that support and have life be easier. I'm just not clear yet about how this fits in with being a positive thinker. I've always been told I should be more positive, and I've been working on that," Richard confided.

"This work is not about being a positive thinker, that can get you into a lot of trouble!" I offered.

"What are you talking about, michael?! My friend, who insisted I call you, said the work you have developed is the ultimate in positive thinking!"

"This work is about honest and appropriate thinking, Richard. There is a disorder that I call 'Premature Positive Thinking.' If you have a negative foundation and refuse to deal with it, positive thinking is very appealing. It becomes another way to avoid. There is a benefit to positive thinking—life improves.

"The problem, as I've observed it, is that the Premature Positive Thinker has to be on top of 'things' all the time. The stress of keeping the negative down with a positive attitude means there is never a minute's rest. Premature Positive Thinking can lead to becoming like the type 'A' personality. It can result in overload and, if you let up the positive thinking for even one moment, things start to crash; the benefits disappear and you get to start over. It's a difficult way to live.

KEY THOUGHT—This work is not about premature positive thinking. It is about honest, appropriate thinking and holding yourself and others accountable for all behaviors.

"Premature Positive Thinking also produces dis-ease . Appropriate and honest thinking is the goal. The only healing and truly restorative processes are those which allow stored negativity to be surfaced, exposed to Love , and released.

"Let go of the need to build a positive framework on top of a negative foundation. Acquire tools and deal with the negative as you develop the capacity to naturally and gracefully live from the positive. In this system, there is no stress from 'trying' to keep a falsehood in place. There is no pretentious thinking because everything less than the positive is given space to surface and heal. In the short term, it takes extra work and commitment to do what I am suggesting, but in the long run it leads to a much easier life.

"With these tools, the body, rid of its burdens, can then use its own recuperative powers to rebuild. Dis-ease is not natural. Health is our natural state and is always possible when interference is removed. True health is impossible to achieve when discord is present. This understanding is the foundation of any true health care system. Without this deeper

comprehension of healing any system of 'healing' is bound to be a 'disease care' system which will consume enormous amounts of wealth."

"That fits for me, but I'm still not sure," Richard looked at me quizzically as he spoke. "Isn't it positive thinking to want to Love everyone and let go of my need to condemn? It seems like you're telling me not to think that, but if I don't I'm stuck with my negative thinking—being angry and blaming others."

"Let me go back to the prison analogy and clarify my point about condemnation. I don't have to condemn the prison in order to inform you of its structure or to say, 'Here are the pitfalls, this is where the guards are and the lowest part of the fence is over there. You will need a ladder and a positive sense of yourself and what you will face in order to make it through.'

"I can say, 'Beware, the earmarks of the false teacher are _____' and identify their characteristics. I can let you know that certain behavior does not support your highest and best. I can warn you, 'Be aware if you find yourself or someone else doing these things,' and be in support of healing those behaviors—all without condemning. However, if your inner dialogue speaks to you frightfully about condemning, perhaps you will need to heal your listening, and rid yourself of the need to gloss over what does not work.

"There are two different issues here, Richard. One is condemning, the other is identifying. If you never make the distinction between the two, you will be vulnerable to either engaging in, or being taken in by the thinking of the false teacher. When we support destructive behavior in the world we are engaging in disintegrative energy .

"False teachers operate in religion, business, government, media, education and families. They can show up anywhere. As we develop the brain cells, we can see the behavior for what it is. If there is condemnation in us, we can then take responsibility for that condemnation, heal it and bring healing and insight to false teachers. The alternative is to refuse to identify what is happening and not know why there is pain, rage or suffering.

"It is amazing how many people are continuously angry—you know, the type who slam doors, kick the cat and beat their kids—and they cannot identify the source of their anger. Most often the rage comes from the helplessness of being in the grips of the false teacher and not knowing how to take back one's own power. The refusal to learn and live in harmony with Truth leads to destructive behavior. The abused become manipulators and abuse those who are weaker, and this serves as a substitute for the power one is lacking over one's own life and is a compensation for insecurity."

"I've felt powerless most of my life, michael. I feel I've been controlled through my fear, and I usually respond with anger. I think you've got me pegged."

"Richard, it's an almost universal story. I could probably say the same thing to ninety percent of the population and be accurate. Most human beings have bought into reality structures, usually for security reasons, that allow them to engage in, support or be

controlled by manipulative behavior and they unknowingly give up their aliveness to do it. With awareness of what is driving us and tools with which to heal, we can free ourselves from these patterned responses. It is important to be discriminating about what you serve with your intelligence, resources and time. Right livelihood means you do nothing that supports dis-integrative energy in the world and use your time, intelligence, money and energy to support only awareness and aliveness!

"The need to condemn negative behavior or those practicing it can also be healed. A willingness to investigate is required. Knowledge is power. Ignorance does not lead to healing, it leads to staying stuck behind the prison fence, suffering and pretending there is no way out—classic victimhood.

"With information, understanding and dedication, it is possible to create a space of healing for anyone who engages in negative behavior. This includes ourselves and anyone who takes advantage of another. With this understanding, we can also support the healing of people who set themselves up to be manipulated. Every player in a situation must be healed for a total shift to occur. Healing also means that each person involved automatically moves closer to the awareness of their true purpose and finds it easier to be guided in its accomplishment.

"It is valuable to comprehend the healing dynamic so that we have the capacity to choose what to do and what not to do. Understanding manipulation in no way evaluates what another has done or should do, for that is his or her business, not ours. However, having proper understanding allows the space for us to be held accountable and to hold others accountable for what is done.

"This brings us to another belief promoted by the manipulator: 'You are bad and wrong if you ever catch me at my game or try to hold me accountable.' There are people functioning out of their pain who manipulate and engage in actions you want to avoid. Their actions and cover stories can be very subtle; some have spent their whole lives building a camouflage for their manipulations.

"It is important, especially since most of us were born into a manipulative world, to understand the subtleties of manipulation. Like the fish that cannot see water because it is so close, some forms of manipulative behavior are so ingrained, they are invisible. I have observed that often, a person being abused thinks it is normal and appropriate to be treated that way.

"When an abuser is confronted, their response is usually, 'That's not abuse, that is proper behavior.' Recall the waitress, Richard? When you became conscious of your behavior, you categorized it as 'destroying.' Prior to having the brain cells to see it for what it was, didn't you see it as proper? Remember, you were just protecting yourself. That 'protection' was manipulation. The ability to identify conduct for what it is, is important in breaking through the automatic cycles of behavior.

"When people who need their daily dose of abuse are confronted, their response is usually the familiar, 'I thought that was the way it was supposed to be.' Their self-put-downs are cradled in guilt and the haunting thought that they deserve to be abused."

Richard listened attentively and appeared to absorb each idea. "This is such shocking information. The part of this that is hard to believe is how oblivious I have been to it all my life. I guess you could say I've been like the person in prison who thought that's just the way life is."

"We have all to some degree been trained in the fear of the world. Each of us, to some extent, has been seduced by and engaged in manipulative behavior. Perhaps that is why most people would rather not admit, talk about and acknowledge the fact that they intimidate others. They do not face themselves as you are now."

Richard was on the edge of emotions surfacing but could not quite let go. Seeing the pained look on his face, I added, "I acknowledge your courage and your willingness to hear new information. That can be an especially difficult task when it involves looking at our own errors or the errors of the people we love. It can be even more difficult when we start to let go of the parts of us that need to be released and healed."

KEY THOUGHT—It requires courage to look at ourselves. Having tools makes looking easier and more productive.