PEACE: Contemplating Contentment,
Understanding Yourself Through Various Religious Writings

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Dedication:

I wish to dedicate this effort to my brother Gordon N. Taub. For all of our squabbles, disagreements and conflicts, we are still brothers. It was he who first started to look in multiple directions to find his truth. In watching his explorations, I gave myself permission to take my own journeys. While we have taken different trails, we still cross paths and compare notes.
Introduction:

This book is part of my journey toward self-discovery and acceptance. I have been looking to the ideas of others I considered wise. It is their wisdom that I am hoping to understand and apply to my own life. I am not writing this work to prove that I am their equal, but rather the opposite. I am writing this book to better understand my changing views of their knowledge.

I have written my questions in the first person for many reasons. First, these are the questions these sayings and stories make me think about. Second, my answers to these questions are not constant, but rather change over time. Third, it is my hope that readers might ask these questions of themselves. Fourth, if my readers decide to join me on this journey, it is my hope that they will help add to this work by sending me their pieces of wisdom or their own questions, so that their insights will also become part of me (the ‘I’).

A Note on Archaic Languages:

Since many of these quotes come from sources written long before our time, the choice of words reflect the biases of their age. Most of the quotes refer to the subject only as male(s). I have left the quotes as I have found them, in the hope that my reader can make the changes needed for her reality. Should this bias really bother you, please remember that in many languages a large group was always referred to with the masculine pronouns, unless the group was all female (i.e. a gathering of female doctors assisted by one male janitor would still be addressed as a masculine group). Therefore, many of these references come out as masculine, when they could actually be referring to either male or females. Besides, English does not have a polite pronoun for a person of undetermined gender. All we have are ‘he, she and it,’ and I would rather not refer to my readers or God as ‘it.’

Some writers get tired of using the word “God” repeatedly, while others are not comfortable putting any direct reference to “God” onto a piece of paper that might be treated without proper respect. Therefore a pronoun or other word that refers to “God” may be capitalized to make the writer’s intent more clear.

Also, many of the quoted writers come from times and places where literacy was limited to a few individuals. These writers assumed only people of the highest skills and social strata would be exposed to their thoughts. Again, I hope my readers will recognize that these ideas are a gift to all who chose to open them.

Warning:

This is part of my journey and yours will probably take different directions. To understand how yours might be different, I should tell you my presumptions (ok assumptions) when I started this work:
1) Every person we come into contact with during our lives affects how and what we feel or think.

2) My emotions are mine. I should understand them, control them and not allow them to become a tool for others.

3) Before I can make peace with others, I need to be at peace with myself. Before I can truly respect others, I need to understand and give myself the same respect.

4) Before I can understand what others reasonably expect of me, I need to know what I can reasonably expect from myself.

5) A good idea is a good idea, regardless of its source.

6) Being a good person means I do not need to deny myself a joy filled life.

Because of these assumptions, it is the authors hope that you will read this book in an active manner. Many of the ideas are expressed in historical or allegorical terms. A reader needs to ask themselves:

1) How these ideas might relate to me?
2) How do these ideas relate to those closest to me?
3) How do these ideas affect how I relate to all the people I come into contact with on a daily basis?

Many of these ideas can be interpreted in more than one way. It is to the readers’ advantage to look at these ideas over time and compare how their interpretations may change. Even as I am editing this book for the umpteenth time, I am finding that my understanding of these ideas has changed in the short times since I typed them.

“This is not a thing to learn inside a day.”

MacLean, Dougie

He [R’ Tarfon] used to say: You are not required to complete the task, yet you are not free to withdraw from it. If you have studied much Torah (Holy Law (sic)), they give you great reward; and your Employer can be relied upon to pay you the wage of your labor, but be aware that the reward of the righteous will be given in the World to Come.

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman
Chapter 1 SURRENDER UNTO GOD

Whether I believe in God, Gods, or no Gods, I need to remember there are parts of my daily life I do not control. I can either choose to fight these random elements in my schedule or embrace them.

Genesis 1:1
In the beginning God created…

Hertz, J. H.

1) If I am created in “God’s image,” than am I also supposed to create?
2) If God found his creations “good,” why do I feel that my works must be perfect?
3) What about the creations of others?
4) Many of the things around me were not listed in God’s creation; why do I find these things so indispensable.
5) If I am created by God, how do I feel this connection in my daily life?
A beginning

There are moments when we hear the call of our higher selves, the call that links us to the divine. Then we know how blessed we are with life and love. May this be such a moment, a time of deeper attachments to the godlike in us and in our world, for which we shall give thanks and praise!

Stern, Chaim

1) How do I feel inside when I know I am in the Divine presence?
2) How can I have that same feeling at other times?
3) When I have these feelings, do I behave differently towards others or towards myself?
4) What kind of effort would it take to feel this divine influence at all times?
Knowing others is Intelligence;  
knowing yourself is true wisdom. 
Mastering others is strength;  
mastering yourself is true power. 

If you realize that you have enough,  
you are truly rich. 
If you stay in the center  
and embrace death with a whole heart,  
you will endure forever

Mitchell, Stephen  

1) Why do I need to understand myself, before I can understand others? 
2) How can a poor man feel wealthy, while a rich man hungers for more? 
3) What questions should I be asking myself?
Help us to turn, O God;
help us to find ourselves;
help us to learn where to seek You.

Stern, Chaim
1984 Gates of Repentance: The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of

1) Why do I need to find myself to find God?
2) If God is never too far away, why can God be so difficult to find?
3) If God is here with me, why can I not feel the Divine presence at all times?
Closeness

A disciple asked the Ball Shem: Why does one who ordinarily feels close to God, sometimes experience a sense of remoteness from the divine presence? He replied: When a parent begins to teach a baby to walk, the parent steadies the child with both hands, and the guiding presence is always felt. Bit by bit, the parent moves away, establishing ‘growing’ distances which the child learns to traverse on its own. God may seem to move away from us sometimes, but perhaps He wants us to grow by taking hesitant steps towards Him.

Stern, Chaim

1) How do I know I am in the Divine presence?
2) What type of activities am I doing when I feel this presence?
3) During what activities do I feel most distant from my Creator?
4) How can I bring my Creator’s influence into my mundane activities?
5) What do I expect from the presence of God?
Exodus XX:2-7
2. I am the LORD thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of the house of bondage.
3. Thou shalt have not other gods before me.
4. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner or likeness, of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;
5. thou shalt not bow down unto them, or serve them; for I the LORD thy God am a Jealous God; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and forth generation of them that hate Me;
6. and showing mercy unto the thousandth generation of them that love Me and keep My commandments.
7. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.

Hertz, J. H.

1) What are my modern idols?
2) How can I divide those activities which are divine acts from those which are base?
3) Why does God have a longer memory of those who do virtuous acts, while I remember everything someone else has done to wrong me?
4) Do I ever feel that God is guiding my actions?
Psalm 23
A psalm of David.
The LORD is my shepherd;
    I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
    He leads me to water in places of repose;
    He renews my life;
    He guides me in right paths
    as befits His name.
Though I walk through the valley of deepest darkness,
    I fear no harm, for You are with me;
    Your rod and Your staff-they comfort me.

You spread a table for me in full view of my enemies;
    You anoint my head with oil;
    My drink is abundant.
Only goodness and steadfast love shall pursue me
    All the days of my life,
    and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
    for many long years.

Greenburg, Moshe; Jonas C. Greenfield & Nahum M. Sarna
1982 Writings: A new translation of The Holy Scriptures according to the
    Traditional Hebrew Texts. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society
    of America. P. 23.

1) Does God understand the difference between my needs and wants better than I do?
2) How is my confidence in God’s protection, similar to carrying a shield or wearing armor?
3) Why can I not see the blessings given to me when they are right in front of me?
4) Do I always know when I am controlling my life or when others are influencing me?
From: The Chapter of the Poets

Verily, they are foes to me, save only the Lord of the worlds, who created me, guides me, and who gives me food and drink. And when I am sick He heals me; He who will kill me, and then bring me to life; and who I hope will forgive my sins on the day of Judgment! Lord, grant me judgment, and let me reach the righteous; and give me a tongue of good report amongst posterity; and make me of the heirs of the paradise of pleasure; and pardon my father, verily, he is of those who err;…

-The Koran

Palmer, E. H.
1910 “Chapters from the Koran”, in Sacred Writings. New York: P F Collier & Son: P 915.

1) Must I control every detail of my life?
2) Can I give someone else control over some details of my life and still feel comfortable?
3) Does my faith offer me comfort in new or difficult situations?
4) Do I understand that I was created to be happy?
5) What daily choices do I make which bring me misery?
Psalm 13
For the leader, a psalm of David.

How long, O LORD; will you ignore me forever?
How long will you hide Your face from me?
How long will I have cares on my mind,
    Grief in my heart all day?
How long will my enemy have the upper hand?
Look at me, answer me, O LORD, my God!
Restore the luster to my eyes,
    lest I sleep the sleep of death;
    lest my enemy say, “I have overcome him,”
    my foes exult when I totter.
But I trust in Your faithfulness,
    My heart will exult Your Deliverance.
I will sing to the LORD,
    For He has been good to me.


1) How can I trust in God, when I am surrounded by the debris of my own failures?
2) Can I use these past failures to teach myself a great lesson?
3) What do I need to change about myself to learn from my failures?
Another Random Thought
Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you drudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you until then.

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.
2001 The Big Book Online. P 164

1) Why do we, “…drudge the road of Happy Destiny?”
2) How can I release control to God when I don’t understand the nature of God?
3) How can I release control to other people when I don’t understand their true nature?
4) What is the relationship between my faith in God and my faith in other people?
The Serenity Prayer
God grant me the SERENITY to
Accept the things I can not change;
COURAGE to change the things I can;
And the WISDOM to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;

Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it:

Trusting that He will make all things
right if I surrender to His Will;
that I may be reasonable happy in life
and supremely happy with Him forever in the next. Amen

Alcoholics Anonymous
2005 The Origin of our Serenity Prayer.
http://www.aahistory.com/prayer.html

1) How does this prayer apply to me?
2) How can I accept the imperfect nature of those around me?
3) How can I accept the imperfect nature within myself?
From: The Chapter of Joseph
They said, ‘O our Father! ask pardon for us of our sins; -verily, we are sinner!’
He said, ‘I will ask pardon for you from my Lord; verily He is pardoning and merciful.

- The Koran

Palmer, E. H.
1910 “Chapters from the Koran,” in Sacred Writings. New York: P F Collier & Son; P 941.

1) Can I ever be fully perfect?
2) If I am divinely created, can I not accept that some of what I think are faults are also divinely created?
3) Just because I have committed a sin in the past, does it mean I am doomed to commit it again in the future?
4) How can I change myself, one action at a time?
Meditation

Do not say after you have sinned, ‘There is no restoration for me,’ but trust in the Lord and repent, and God will receive you. And do not say, ‘if I confess, I shall be disgraced,’ but hold position in contempt, humble yourself, and return in repentance.

Stern, Chaim

1) Why do I feel it is so difficult to admit when I make a mistake?
2) Why do I let my fragile ego dictate my behavior?
3) If God could forgive the people of the Bible or those around me, then why could God not forgive me?
4) Are my feelings of guilt so valuable to me that I do not want forgiveness?
5) When is the right time to ask for forgiveness?
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
1 A season is set for everything, a time for every experience under heaven:
2 A time for being born and a time for dying,
A time for planting and a time for uprooting the planted;
3 A time for slaying and a time for healing,
A time for tearing down and a time for building up;
4 A time for weeping and a time for laughing,
A time for wailing and a time for dancing;
5 A time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones,
A time for embracing and a time for shunning embraces;
6 A time for seeking and a time for losing,
A time for keeping and a time for discarding;
7 A time for ripping and a time for sewing,
A time for silence and a time for speaking;
8 A time for loving and a time for hating;
A time for war and a time for peace.

Greenburg, Moshe; Jonas C. Greenfield & Nahum M. Sarna
1982 Writings: a new translation of The Holy Scriptures according to the
Traditional Hebrew Texts. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society
of America. P. 386-387.

1) How do I know what season I am in?
2) How do I move myself from one time or emotion to another?
3) If I were to rewrite this saying with modern tasks, what tasks would I use?
4) Why do I need both a time for peace and war?
5) How do I create time in my busy life for self examination?
Prayer for Forgiveness

On this day, Eternal God, we come to You aware of our failings. Help us to cast our sins away, and to find peace.

Stern, Chaim


1) How can I make a fresh start today?
2) How do I make today the right time to ask forgiveness?
3) Is there ever a wrong time to ask forgiveness? Why?
From: The Chapter of the Table

But whoso turns again after his injustice and acts aright, verily, God will turn to him, for, verily, God is forgiving, merciful.

-The Koran

Palmer, E. H.

1) Have I really done anything to place myself beyond all hope of redemption?
2) Of those sins I have committed, what activities can I do to repair the damage?
3) How can I take the first needed steps?
Forgive your neighbors the wrongs they have done you, and when you pray, your sins will be forgiven. If I nurse anger against another, can I ask pardon of the Lord? Showing no pity for one like myself, can I then plead for my own sins? If I, a creature of flesh, nourish resentment, who will forgive me my sins?

Stern, Chaim

1) Can I truly treat others as I would like to be treated?  
2) Do I really forgive others, or do I still hold my discomforts tightly to myself?  
3) How can I ever forgive others, when I can not even forgive myself?
Failure is an Opportunity.
If you blame someone else,
there is no end to the blame.

Therefore the Master
fulfills her own obligation
and corrects her own mistakes.
She does what she needs to do
and demands nothing of others.

Mitchell, Stephen

1) How can I see failure as an opportunity?
2) Do I always need to find blame in failure?
3) How am I affected when I blame others for our collective failures?
A difficult Prayer

O source of mercy, give us the grace to show forbearance to those who offend us. When the wrongs and injustices of others wound us, may our hearts not despair of human good. May no trial, however severe, embitter our souls and destroy our trust. When beset by trouble and sorrow, our mothers and fathers put on the armor of faith and fortitude. May we too find strength to meet adversity with quiet courage and unshaken will. Help us to understand that injustice and hate will not for ever afflict the human race; that righteousness and mercy will triumph in the end.

Stern, Chaim


1) How strong is my own, “…armor of faith?”
2) How can I keep a healthy perspective towards others and yet still trust them?
3) What is a “…quiet courage and unshakable will?”
4) Why do I need faith that goodness will prevail?
5) Which daily rituals and rules could cause me to bring grief to others or myself?
Tanzen and Ekido were once traveling together down a muddy road. A heavy rain was still falling.

Coming around a bend, they met a lovely girl in a silk kimono and sash, unable to cross the intersection.

“Come on, girl,” said Tanzan at once. Lifting her in his arms, he carried her over the mud.

Ekido did not speak again until that night when they reached the temple. Then he could no longer restrain himself. “We monks don’t go near females,” he told Tanzan, “especially not young and lovely ones. It is dangerous. Why did you do that?”

“I left the girl there,” said Tanzan. “Are you still carrying her?”

Reps, Paul & Nyogen Senzaki

1) How many burdens do we still carry upon our shoulders?
2) How many angers do we still let weigh upon ourselves?
3) Do these burdens help us or get in the way?
4) How can I let them go?
5) How can I use these burdens to help me?
From: The Chapter of the ‘Covered’
Nay, it is a memorial! and let him who will remember it; but none will remember except God please. He is most worthy of fear; and he is most worthy to forgive!
- The Koran

Palmer, E. H.

1) How long do I hold my anger before I am willing to forgive someone?
2) Do I just let my anger pass, or do I hold onto it like a precious stone?
3) If God can forgive, why can’t I?
From: The Chapter of Imran’s Family

God loves the patient. And their word was only to say, ‘Lord forgive us our sin and our extravagance affairs; and make firm our footing, and help us against the misbelieving folk!’ and God gave them the reward of this world, and good reward for the future too, for God doth love the kind.

- The Koran

Palmer, E. H.


1) Is everyday a new chance to start over?
2) Can I wake up one morning as a new person?
3) If I can not change my past, can I focus on my present and future?
4) Can I ask for help when I need it? Why don’t I?
I John 4:16-21
16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in Him.
17 Herein is our love made perfect that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world.
18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.
19 We love him, because He first loved us.
20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?
21 And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

Lawson, J. Gilchrist

1) How can I honestly love the person, but hate their sin?
2) How can I love another person without fear of being betrayed?
3) How can I believe that God loves me, when I have a problem loving myself?
4) What is the relationship between love and peace?
A Simple Prayer

May we lie down this night in peace, and rise up to life renewed. May night spread over us a shelter of peace, of quiet calm, the blessing of rest. There will come a time when morning will bring no word of war or famine or anguish; there will come a day of happiness, of contentment and peace. Praised be the source of joy within us, for the night and its rest, for the promise of peace.

Stern, Chaim


1) What can I do on a daily basis to bring a time of peace and happiness closer to reality?
2) When can I say, “Today I have done enough?”
3) How do I know what tasks I must ask others to help me with, and those tasks I can not conquer today?
Chapter 2 KNOW THY SELF

Before I can hope to understand others, I need to better understand myself. It was a rude discovery that those around me could predict my behaviors, because they knew my reactions better than I did. My true friends helped me to learn how my behaviors worked against me. They also showed me how some of my goals would result in consequences I would find unpleasant. So I must constantly be examining my own actions and dreams.

Birth is a beginning
And death a destination.
And life is a journey:
From childhood to maturity
And youth to age;
From innocence to awareness
And Ignorance to knowing;
From foolishness to discretion
   And then, perhaps, to wisdom;
From weakness to strength
Or strength to weakness-
   And, often, back again;
From health to sickness
   And back, we pray, to health again;
From offense to forgiveness,
From loneliness to love,
From joy to gratitude,
From pain to compassion,
And grief to understanding-
   From fear to faith;
From defeat to defeat to defeat-
Until, looking backward or ahead,
We see that victory lies
Not at some high place along the way,
But in having made the journey, stage by stage,
   A sacred pilgrimage.
Birth is a beginning
And death a destination.
And life is a journey,
A sacred pilgrimage-
To life everlasting.

Stern, Chaim

1) What are the differences between victory, success and succeeding?
2) How can my collected past failures be built into a success?
3) What would I call a successful day, month, year, or life?
The Unexamined Life Is Not Worth Living

Someone will say, “Socrates, if you hold your tongue, you may go to a foreign city, and no one will interfere with you.” Now I have great difficulty in making you understand my answer to this. For if I tell you that to do as you say would be a disobedience to the God, and therefore that I cannot hold my tongue, you will not believe I am serious. If I say again that the greatest good of man is daily to converse about virtue, and all these subject concerning which you hear me examining myself and others, and that the unexamined life is not worth living, you are still less likely to believe me.

Plato, Apology (Socrates Defense)

Macrone, Michael

1) What does Plato mean, “The unexamined life is not worth living?”
2) Socrates used this against a charge that carries the death penalty; why was this concept so important to him?
3) How deeply have I examined my own life?
Plato’s Cave

“And now,” I said, “let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened: Behold! human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open toward the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and they have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show puppets…. [they are like ourselves,] and they only see their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave.”

Plato, Republic, Book 7

Macrone, Michael

The concept of Plato’s Cave can be summarized as: The only things we think we know are learned with our own senses and interpretations. If a lesson falls outside of our expectations we will not be as ready to accept these ideas. Therefore, our ‘cave’ is our own limited experiences, and the ‘shadows’ are how we view these experiences within our own minds. This often means that the monsters and burdens that hold us back, may only be a small problem, exaggerated by our own flawed expectations.

1) Are there other ways someone else might feel about our experiences?
2) Can I view these events from different viewpoints?
3) Is the monster on the wall in front of me real, or is it a shadow created in my own mind?
4) Have I created expectations for myself that no one else expects of me? What are they?
A Short Story

When I was a child my mother said: “I am not perfect.”
At the time, I was convinced this was the biggest copout on Earth. What does she mean she is not perfect. Should we not all be striving for perfection? Should we not be trying to do our best? Only over time did I understand the power of her simple honest statement.

When I expect myself to be perfect, I will always be angry with myself. Every time I make a mistake, fail or fall short, I will be making negative personal judgments. Further, I will expect everyone else to also be striving toward my own vision of his or her unachievable goals. So not only will I be miserable with myself, but I will also expect everyone else to be miserable.

The power of “I am not perfect” is that it gives me permission to fail. This permission also allows me to fail gloriously. I can take on larger challenges without too much risk to my own ego, by accepting that I may have taken on too much. I can fail, while limiting the damage to my delicate self image. After all, this one task does not define my worth, because I am not perfect. So I will pick myself up, learn from my mistakes, and try again.

-Author

1) When was I “taught” that I had to be perfect?
2) Why must I give myself permission to fail?
3) How can I give myself permission to fail gloriously?
4) If I don’t expect others to be perfect, why do I expect it from myself?
Know Thyself…
From the heavens descends “Know thyself” [gnothi seauton];
It should be fixed upon the mind and wielded by memory,
Whether you seek a wife or desire a seat in the senate.
– Juvenal, “Eleventh Satire,”

Macrone, Michael

1) Why do thinkers, classical to modern, put such emphasis on knowing oneself?
2) If I am with myself everyday, why don’t I know myself yet?
3) What is the relationship between knowing myself and understanding myself?
4) What is the relationship between understanding myself and understanding others?
5) How can I learn when my own actions and wishes actually go against my own best interests?
What cost Freedom?

But the final price of freedom is the willingness to face that most frightening of all beings, one’s own self.

Starhawk (Simos, Miriam)

1) How am I a slave to my own behaviors, expectations and emotions?
2) If I truly want freedom, what will I have to change about myself?
3) How can I learn to appreciate my imperfect self?
A Private Thought

Lord please teach me to accept those imperfections within me. Let me not have anger with others who share these imperfections. Please let me see the beauty within those with whom I disagree. Let me understand that this same spark of life resides within me.

Lord, help me to understand the anger within my heart hurts no one other than myself. My enemies do not feel it, yet it burns me up inside.

-Author

1) Why do I put so much energy into the hatred of others?
2) How can I let this anger pass over or through me?
3) How can I use my feelings of being wronged to create and build, rather than as a self-destructive force?
Who am I?

A Zen Student came to Bankei and complained: “Master, I have an ungovernable temper. How can I cure it?”
“You have something very strange,” replied Bankei. “Let me see what you have.”
“Just now I can not show it to you,” replied the other.
“When can you show it to me?” asked Bankei.
“It arises unexpectedly,” replied the student.
“Then,” Concluded Bankei, “it must not be your own true nature. If it were, you could show it to me at any time. When you were born you did not have it, and your parents did not give it to you. Think that over.”

Reps, Paul & Nyogen Senzaki

1) Do I control my emotions, or do they control me?
2) Is this how I really want to feel?
3) How do I become more aware of my emotions, and thus gain control?
4) Will I always need to control my emotions?
Why Bother

The individualist without strategy who takes opponents lightly will inevitably become the captives of others.
-Master Sun

Sun Tzu

1) How well do I work with others? Who could help me learn to work with others better?
2) What are the true capabilities of my opponents?
3) If my opponent(s) is/are so weak, why do I bother to have conflicts with him/her/them?
My Place in the Bigger Picture

Keichu, the great Zen teacher of the Meiji era, was the head of the Tofuku, a cathedral in Kyoto. One day the governor of Kyoto called upon him for the first time. His attendant presented the card of the governor, which read: Kitagaki, Governor of Kyoto.

“I have no business with such a fellow,” said Keichu to his attendant. “Tell him to get out of here.”

The attendant carried the card back with apologies. “That was my error,” said the governor, and with a pencil he scratched out the words Governor of Kyoto. “Ask your teacher again.”

“Oh, is it that Kitagaki?” exclaimed the teacher when he saw the card. “I want to see that fellow.”

Reps, Paul & Nyogen Senzaki

1) Of what titles and achievements am I most proud?
2) Why should those around me care about these past activities?
3) Why is it important to me for others to acknowledge these distinctions?
4) Are there times I should let go of my titles and accolades?
When a Mater governs, the people are hardly aware he exits.
Next best is a leader who is loved.
Next, one who is feared.
The worst is one who is despised.

If you don’t trust the people, you make them untrustworthy.

The Master doesn’t talk, he acts.
When his work is done, the people say, “Amazing: we did it, all by ourselves!”

Mitchell, Stephen

1) Why do I seek out titles, accolades and awards?
2) How do I act when I want others to notice me?
3) How do I act when I do not want attention?
4) How am I acting now?
The Evaluation

A few years ago, a student wrote in my evaluation, “Taub is an arrogant, self-absorbed jackass.” Later, when I was talking to my supervisor about it, I asked him, “I like this description; can I put it on my business cards? Professor Taub, arrogant self-absorbed jackass.” We had a good laugh and the conversation was soon over and forgotten.

I have no problem admitting I am arrogant. Anyone who is willing to make a living by publicly teaching a subject that no individual can completely understand must be arrogant.

I must also admit to being self-absorbed. After all, I am an ego-centric person, having only seen the world through my eyes, heard it through my ears and experienced it through my other senses. I can only imagine understanding others’ points of view; I can not know that I understand them in complete confidence.

If the student meant to call me stubborn when they used the term “jackass,” I plead guilty. To accomplish anything in this world, you must be stubborn enough to ignore the negative voices around you and in your own head.

By accepting this student’s judgment with a laugh, my supervisor understood my self-understanding. We turned the insults away from me and toward the person who wrote them. For in truth, these words argued more against my critic than they did against me.

-Author

1) How do I turn the insults of others into compliments?
2) Do I know when to accept honest criticism?
3) What is fair and honest criticism?
Patterned Behaviors

Mokusen Hiki was living in a temple in the province of Tamba. One of his adherents complained of the stinginess of his wife.

Mokusen visited the adherent’s wife and showed her his clenched fist before her face.

“What do you mean by that?” asked the surprised woman.

“Suppose my fist were always like that. What would you call it?” he asked.

“Deformed,” responded the woman.

Then he opened his hand flat to her face and asked, “Suppose it were always like that, what then?”

“Another kind of deformity,” said the wife.

“If you understand that much,” finished Mokusen, “you are a good wife.” Then he left.

After his visit, this wife helped her husband to distribute as well as to save.

Reps, Paul & Nyogen Senzaki

1) What behaviors do I repeat?
2) Is this a healthy pattern?
3) How do those around me see these behaviors?
4) Is this how I want them to see me?
5) How can these patterned behaviors be used against me?
Know the Lay of the Land
Therefore those who do not know the plans of competitors cannot prepare alliances. Those who do not know the lay of the land cannot maneuver their forces. Those who do not use local guides cannot take advantage of the ground. The military of an effective rulership must know all of these things.

When the military of an effective rulership attacks a larger country, the people cannot unite. When its power overwhelms opponents, alliances cannot come together.

-Master Sun

Sun Tzu

1) Do I really know what others are thinking, or am I guessing?
2) How well do I really understand how I will behave in any situation?
3) How well do I really understand how others will behave in any situation?
4) Will I let myself get help from others?
5) Do I know when I need to get assistance from others?
6) Why is it so hard to make a public request?
True Love

Twenty monks and one nun, who was named Eshun, were practicing meditation with a certain Zen Master.

Eshun was very pretty even though her head was shaved and her dress plain. Several monks secretly fell in love with her. One of them wrote her a love letter, insisting upon a private meeting.

Eshun did not reply. The following day the master gave a lecture to the group, and when it was over, Eshun arose. Addressing the one who had written her, she said, “If you really love me so much, come and embrace me now.”

Reps, Paul & Nyogen Senzaki

1) Why can I not publicly put words to my private wishes and desires?
2) Are my wishes and desires worth giving up everything I publicly claim to hold dear?
3) Why am I so afraid of being rejected by others?
4) Must I try to feel ownership over others or our relationships?
Equality

Nature has made all men equal in liberty but not in their natural perfection. The free man is he who is his own master, according to the philosopher (Metaphysics, I, 2 982b6).

-Saint Thomas Aquinas

Aquinas, Saint Thomas

1) How am I deficient in my ‘natural perfection?’
2) Am I my own master, or do I let others manipulate me?
3) What changes do I need to take mastery of my own behaviors?
There are four types of temperament:  
a) One who is angered easily and pacified easily, his gain is offset by his loss;  
b) one who is hard to anger and hard to pacify, his loss is offset by his gain;  
c) one who is hard to anger and pacified easily is pious;  
d) one who is angered easily and hard to pacify is wicked.

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman  

1) What type of person am I now?  
2) Will my collective ‘losses’ and ‘gains’ be of importance to me in twenty-five years?  
3) How do I change my own personality?  
4) How would those around me, describe my personality?
After Bankei had passed away, a blind man who lived near the master’s temple told a friend: “Since I am blind, I cannot watch a person’s face, so I must judge his character by the sound of his voice. Ordinarily when I hear someone congratulate another on his happiness or success, I also hear a secret tone of envy. When condolence is expressed for the misfortune of another, I hear pleasure and satisfaction, as if the one condoling was really glad there was something left to gain in his own world.”(sic) “In all of my experience, however, Bankei’s voice was always sincere. Whenever he expressed happiness, I heard nothing but happiness, and whenever he expressed sorrow, sorrow was all I heard.”

Reps, Paul & Nyogen Senzaki

1) How well can I control my voice or emotions?
2) What would the blind man hear in my voice?
3) What do I want him to hear?
4) Would I accept what he tells me about myself?
Who am I & Who are You?

So it is said that if you know others and yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles; if you do not know others but know yourself, you will win one and lose one; if you do not know others and do not know you will be imperiled in every single battle.

-Master Sun

Sun Tzu


1) What are my true strengths and weaknesses?
2) Can I really know others, if I don’t understand myself?
3) What can I learn about myself by watching others?
4) What can I learn about others by watching myself?
From Generation to Generation

A wise mother was reading one evening, when her eldest child came to her. “Mother,” the child demanded. “I need to buy new clothes. No one else at school would wear these old rags.”

The mother looked up at her child, “They looked fine a few months ago.”

The child looked across at her, “I want to be popular, because those who are popular are happy. I can not be popular wearing these old things.”

The mother, remembering buying this child so many clothes only ten weeks ago, shook her head expressing her displeasure.

The child realized this was a losing battle and changed directions, “You don’t really love me. If you truly loved me, you would make me happy.”

The mother let her anger pass through her. She listened to her child’s statement, took a deep breath and asked, “Do you love yourself? Why can you not make yourself happy?”

-Author

1) Why do I find it so difficult to make myself happy?
2) What is the real relationship between being popular and being happy? Is there a relationship?
3) Can a ‘thing’ make me happy or bring me contentment?
4) How do my ‘things’ get in my way?
A Simple Prayer

Lord, please help me to keep from becoming my enemy.
   -Author

1) What are those traits in others I do not like?
2) Do I share any of these traits with them?
3) What actions do I routinely take, which may lead to unfavorable results?
4) What behaviors do I need to change to better control my own self-image?
5) What behaviors do I need to change to better control how others see me?
6) Which of my behaviors can others use to make me act in their favor?
Acting against myself

A Government should not mobilize an army out of anger, military leaders should not provoke war out of wrath. Act when it is beneficial, desist if it is not. Anger can revert to joy, wrath can revert to delight, but a nation destroyed cannot be restored to existence, and the dead cannot be restored to life. Therefore an enlightened government is careful about this, a good military leadership is alert to this. This is the way to secure a nation and keep the armed forces whole.

-Master Sun

Sun Tzu


1) Have I ever made a poor decision while angry?
2) Can I control my anger, or does it control me?
3) Can I set my anger aside when I need to, and deal with it later?
4) Is there a way I can use my anger positively?
5) Can I use anger for self motivation or the motivation of others?
A Dangerous Force
   Use anger to throw them into disarray.
   -Master Sun

Sun Tzu

1) Whose anger is the master writing about?
3) How can I manipulate the angry emotions of others?
4) How can I control my own anger?
5) How do I let others manipulate my emotions?
The Tongue Is Sharper than the Sword
Do not be carried away in your heart by the delights of bold talk.
Practice the art of speaking, which will profit everyone greatly.
Speech is for man a sharper weapon than the sword;
God has given each being one weapon: to birds,
The ability to fly; to coursers, speed; to lions, strength;
To bulls, horns which grow of themselves; to bees, he has given
Their sting as a natural defense; to men, the armor of words.
-Pseudo-Phocylides, *Wise Sayings*, lines 122-128

Macrone, Michael

1) When do I use words as weapons against others?
2) When do I use my words to protect myself or others?
3) Which words give me comfort when I hear them?
4) Which words cause me stress when I hear them?
5) What comments would I most like to hear when I am working?
Pleasure in life

In fact, we see that in any field of rational activity, those who enjoy their work are better able to judge detailed matters, and to make a precise investigation into those things that are accomplished with pleasure.

-Saint Thomas Aquinas

Aquinas, Saint Thomas

1) Can I change my own attitude towards my current problems?
2) If I do change my attitude, how will it affect those around me?
3) If I am not enjoying my current problems, can I change these problems into something I do enjoy?
How Things are Done

In the truck on the way to the river he spoke a few words about magic…“Magic” he said, “is simply the art of getting results.” He noted that the fish were dying and that they might as well be put to good purpose fertilizing the earth. He impressed upon us the necessity for our actions.

Michael then began to describe how bears catch fish with their paws. He asked us to visualize ourselves as bears, to place ourselves in the position of a hungry bear in need of food. I began to imagine the essence of a bear’s life. In such a mood, we waded to the middle of the river, where the water came up to our waists, and began slapping our hands together very quickly, catching fish between our hands and throwing them over our heads and onto the beach. We continued this process of slapping and throwing until the beach was covered with fish. An hour later, we gathered them up in buckets and took then to the truck, which was soon filled almost to the top.

If I may presume to broaden Michael’s definition of magic, it might read something like this: Magic is a convenient word for a whole collection of techniques, all of which involve the mind.

Alder, Margot

1) Why do I feel better about doing a job if I know the reason for doing it and how the task will fit into the bigger project?
2) The word “magic” creates strong emotions in people: what thoughts do I have about this word?
3) How does my attitude towards the job, affect the outcome of my work?
4) How can the attitude of those who ask me to do the job affect how I feel about the job?
Whose counsel?
   It is better to listen to anyone who is lenient and permits, rather than one who forbids. Anyone can be strict and forbid.
   -Rashi

Pearl, Chaim

1) Why is it easier to be strict and forbidding, than lenient?
2) If I am lenient with others can I also be lenient with myself?
3) Why do I say ‘no,’ when I really want to say ‘yes?’ What does this say about my priorities?
4) How do I choose the impossible tasks to quit, verses those which I will continue to tackle?
Internal Force

When the speed of rushing water reaches the point where it can move boulders, this is the force of momentum. When the speed of a hawk is such that it can strike and kill, this is precision. So it is with skillful warriors-their force is swift, their precision is close. Their force is like a catapult, their precision is like releasing the trigger.

-Master Sun

Sun Tzu


1) How can I learn to be both precise and swift?
2) Am I persistent enough to ‘move boulders’?
3) What do I need to take to develop these skills and make them work with my personality?
4) What daily rituals can I practice to make my work sweeter to me?
Chapter 3 RITUALS AND FORGIVENESS

Asking others to forgive our actions is a naturally uncomfortable situation. I am admitting to another that I have wronged them, and yet I still need their positive presence in my life. Therefore I am setting my own ego aside and showing my weaker self to another. This can be uncomfortable giving another person a chance to deny me relief while I am humbling myself and showing my vulnerability. To help us deal with necessary but uncomfortable situations we create rituals to help make these exercises more predictable.

What is a Ritual
At present, some of the most powerful rituals in the United States take place in the theater, in modern dance performances, sporting events, or occasionally certain public events such as some rock concerts of the 1960’s.

Alder, Margot

1) What was the last ritual in which I took part where I felt either the Divine presence or a group consciousness?
2) What aspect of this ritual made the greatest impact on my life?
3) How can I bring these behaviors and rituals into my daily life?
4) What daily rituals have I already created?
Mark 11:25-26
25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.
26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive you your trespasses.

Lawson, J. Gilchrist

1) How can I forgive those who have wronged me, even if they never ask?
2) How do I feel when others ask me to forgive them?
3) How do I feel when I need to apologize to others?
4) Why do I find it harder to forgive those who are close to me?
Matthew 18:15
15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his faults between thee and him alone: If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

Lawson, J. Gilchrist

1) Do I prefer to be corrected immediately in public or later in private?
2) How much effort am I willing to put out for only the potential of gaining a friend or ally?
3) Am I willing to wait until we are in a private situation to tell another they have wronged me?
XXIII Humility
1. Blessed is the servant who would accept correction, accusation, and blame from another as patiently as he would from himself. 2. Blessed is the servant who when rebuked quietly agrees, respectfully submits, humbly admits his fault, and quickly agrees re-amends. 3. Blessed is the servant who is not quick to excuse himself and who humbly accepts shame and blame for sin, even though he did not commit any fault.

-Saint Francis of Assisi

Armstrong, Regis J. & Ignatious C. Brady

1) When should I just accept another’s rebuke, if just to end a conflict?
2) How can I differentiate between when someone is correcting me out of concern for my welfare instead of their own insecurities?
3) If I expect others to accept responsibility for their faults, why do I find it so hard to do so myself?
4) Why do I feel so small when others are offering me needed advice?
Matthew 18:4
4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Lawson, J. Gilchrist

1) How did I feel when I was a little child, surrounded by people three times my size?
2) Did I always get what I wanted when I was five?
3) When I was five, did I take what I wanted, or was I required to ask others to help?
4) Why have I changed?
A servant of God cannot know how much patience and humility he has within himself as long as he is content. When the time comes, however, when those who should make him content do the opposite, he has as much patience and humility as he has at that time and no more.

-Saint Francis of Assisi

Armstrong, Regis J.

1) What is the relationship between inner peace and contentment with my lot in life?
2) If I am not content when others care for me as I want, how can I be content when others do not care for me this way?
3) When I am tired, do I make an effort to be as patient with others as I would like them to be with me?
4) When was the last time I reached out to those who frustrate me most?
Confession of Sin

For transgressions against God, the Day of Atonement atones; but for transgressions of one human being against another, the Day of Atonement does not atone until they have made peace with one another.

I hereby forgive all who have hurt me, all who have wronged me, whether deliberately or inadvertently, whether by word or deed. May no one be punished on my account.

As I forgive and pardon those who have wronged me, may those whom I have harmed forgive and pardon me, whether I acted deliberately or inadvertently, whether by word or by deed.

Stern, Chaim

1) Are there some acts against myself or others for which I just can not give forgiveness?
2) Does this unwillingness to forgive others hurt me or them?
3) If I forgive others, does this mean they will escape retribution, punishment, or responsibility for their earlier actions?
4) What could another person do to earn my forgiveness?
5) Am I willing to do these same actions to earn forgiveness from another?
From: The Chapter of the Believer

Our Lord! Thou dost embrace all things in mercy and knowledge, that pardon those who turn and repent and follow thy way, and guard them from the torments of hell! Our Lord! Make them enter into the gardens of Eden which thou has promised them, and to those who do well of their fathers, and their wives and their seed; verily, thou are the mighty and the wise! and guard them from evil deeds, for he whom thou shalt guard from evil deeds on this day, thou wilt have mercy on, and that is mighty bliss!’

-The Koran

Palmer, E. H.

1) What is true repentance?
2) What is true repentance for me?
3) Can I accept repentance from others, if I don’t accept it from myself?
4) What repentance would I accept from those who anger me?
Needs of the Others

When Bankei held his seclusion-weeks of meditation, pupils from many parts of Japan came to attend. During one of these gatherings a pupil was caught stealing. The matter was reported to Bankei with the request that the culprit be expelled. Bankei ignored the case.

Later the pupil was caught in a similar act, and again Bankei disregarded the matter. This angered the other pupils, who drew up a petition asking for the dismissal of the thief, stating that otherwise they would leave in a body.

When Bankei had read the petition, he called everyone before him. “You are wise brothers,” he told them. “You know what is right and what is not right. You may go somewhere else to study if you wish, but this poor brother does not even know right from wrong. Who will teach him if I do not? I am going to keep him here even if all the rest of you leave.”

A torrent of tears cleansed the face of the brother who had stolen. All desire to steal had vanished.

Reps, Paul & Nyogen Senzaki

1) When confronted by others, am I brave enough to compliment them?
2) What does it cost me to offer a kind word?
3) How can these kind words be used against me later?
4) How can I use kind words to turn a conflict into a lesson?
From: The Chapter of the Table

O ye who believe! stand steadfast to God as witnesses with justice; and let not ill-will towards people make you sin by not acting with equity. Act with equity, that is nearer to piety, and fear God; for God is aware of what you do.

-The Koran

Palmer, E. H.

1) How do I treat people differently?
2) Would I consider this treatment equal?
3) Why do I still make judgments about others, even when on a conscious level I know better?
4) Why do I find it difficult to keep my judgments to myself?
From: The Chapter of Mary

They shall hear no empty talk therein, but only 'peace;' and they shall have their provisions therein, morning and evening; that is Paradise which we will give for an inheritance to those of our servants who are pious!

-The Koran

Palmer, E. H.

1910 “Chapters from the Koran”, in Sacred Writings, New York: P F Collier & Son: P 922.

1) What is inner peace?
2) What are the physical sensations of inner peace?
3) Can I create these feelings within myself?
4) How can inner peace help me find the other answers for which I am seeking?
From: The Chapter of the Inevitable
Reward for that which they have done!
They shall hear no folly there and no sin;
Only the speech, ‘Peace, Peace!’
And the fellows of the right-what right lucky fellows!
    -The Koran

Palmer, E. H.

1) What is my definition of Paradise?
2) Would I really be happy living this way?
3) What are the physical feelings that let me know I am truly happy?
4) What would it take for me to experience these feelings during the next five minutes?
Beauty and Comfort

Three items are required for beauty: first, integrity or perfection [integritas sive perfectio], for things that are lessened are ugly by this very fact; second, due proportion or harmony [debita proportion sive consonantia]; and third brilliance [claritas]-thus, things that have a bright color are said to be beautiful.

-Aquinas, Saint Thomas


1) How can I take this idea of beauty and use it within my group?
2) How can I/we achieve integrity in my/our actions?
3) How can I/we achieve “due proportions” or balance in my/our actions?
4) How can I/we bring brilliance and clarity to my/our actions?
Pride
The concept of power-from-within encourages healthy pride, not self-effacing anonymity; joy in one’s strength, not shame and guilt.

Starhawk (Simos, Miriam)

1) How can I have pride in myself, without this same pride being a stumbling block?
2) What quality makes me most proud?
3) Which quality of self-pride gives me the strongest support?
4) How can I develop pride in my own efforts and not try to take glory from those around me?
Our tradition says that God created us through one human being to teach us that whoever destroys a single human soul has destroyed an entire world.
And whoever sustains a single human soul has sustained an entire world.
And a single human being was created for the sake of peace, that none may say: My lineage is greater than yours.

Stern, Chaim

1) If life is so precious, why do we waste it in invaluable ways?
2) How can I learn to value the life of another person as equal to that of my own?
3) Why are my own and my family’s past accomplishments how I define my own future worth?
From: The Chapter of the Table
   For this cause we prescribed to the children of Israel that whoso kills a soul, unless to be for another soul or for violence in the land, it is as though he killed men altogether; but whoso saves one, it is as though he saved men altogether.
   -The Koran

Palmer, E. H.

1) Why is the life of one worth the life of all?
2) What simple steps can I take to save a life?
3) Will I take the steps to help others that I expect them to take for me?
Chapter 4 AVOIDING DANGEROUS CONFLICTS

If I can predict a conflict or see how one might develop, then I will be in a better position to avoid it. Avoiding future conflicts is much easier to do then to coordinate multiple conflicts simultaneously.

Peace does not always mean ‘love thy enemy.’
It might be best if you can respect thy enemy.
   We need not always agree, but we do need to agree to listen.
-Author

1) Why do I find it hard to listen to those with whom I am likely to disagree?
2) Why do I find it easy to listen less critically to those with whom I agree?
3) Why can I not just treat others as I feel they are treating me?
An Idea

In a place where no one behaves like a human being, you must strive to be human!

Stern, Chaim

1) Why do I have to be the one to set a better role model?
2) How can I “strive to be human” without loosing myself or setting myself up to be abused by others?
Exodus XX:14
Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor’s.

Hertz, J. H.

1) Why can I not just enjoy the things I already have?
2) Why do I need more things when I already can not use everything I already have?
3) If I have been taught to share from an early age, why do not I do it more often?
4) Why do I find wanting a more powerful stimulus than having?
5) Why do I remember the negative commandments so easily?
Exodus XX:13
Thou shalt not murder.
Thou shalt not commit adultery.
Thou shalt not steal.
Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Hertz, J. H.

1) What is the difference between “murder” and “kill?”
2) Is not adultery another form of coveting that which does not ‘belong’ to you?
3) What is the relationship between coveting and stealing?
4) Why do I enjoy gossiping about people, when I know it is so destructive?
Leviticus 19 (14)

You shall not curse the deaf,

Here scripture states that one must not curse a deaf person. But how do we know that no person may be cursed-deaf or not? We learn this from another verse (Exodus 22:27): “You shall not curse-among your people.” Than if the law is that no man may be cursed, why does our present verse single out “the deaf”? It does so to provide an analogy: just as a deaf person is a living person, so the prohibition applies only against cursing the living, thus excluding a dead person who, though he cannot hear and is therefore “deaf,” cannot feel the hurt because he is dead.

-Rashi

Pearl, Chaim

1) Why is it a sin to harm another if they might never learn of my actions?
2) Why are we repeatedly commanded to control our speech about others?
3) How does my chest and head feel when I learn that others have been talking about me?
In general, I have tried to be aware of my own biases and to make them clear so that, if you wish, you can steer between the shoals.

Alder, Margot  

1) What are my own biases?  
2) From where did I get these biases?  
3) When am I open to testing or changing my biases or beliefs?
I said WHAT?
“FANATIC,” according to the simplest etymology, derives from the Latin *fanum*, “temple.” But the meaning “zealous” or “zealot” seems to derive from the peculiar behavior of priests who served the Roman war goddess Bellona at a *fanum* built by the military dictator Sulla in the first century B.C. Every year the priests staged a festival during which they tore off their robes and hacked at themselves with axes, splattering blood everywhere. This behavior could only be a sign of divine inspiration, and so *fanaticus* came to mean something like “crazed by the gods.” When the word “fanatic” first appeared in English in the Sixteenth Century, it meant “crazy person,” and then more specifically “possessed with divine fury.” “Religious maniac” is still the principal meaning of the term, but in shortened form “fan” it also means simply “devotee” or “adherent.”

Macrone, Michael

1) In what situations have I realized that my group is acting irrationally?
2) What gave/gives me the courage to leave these groups or stand up against them?
3) How far am I willing to let others go before I must stand up and act?
XI  No one should be corrupted by the Evil of Another
1. Nothing should upset a servant of God except sin.
2. And no matter how another person may sin, if the servant of God lets himself become
angry and disturbed because of this, [and] not because of love. He stores up guilt for
himself (cf. Rm 2:5).
3. That servant of God who does not become angry or upset at anything lives justly
without anything of his own.
4. And he is blessed who does not keep anything for himself, rendering to Caesar what is
Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s (MT 22:21).
   -Saint Francis of Assisi

Armstrong, Regis J. & Ignatious C. Brady
1982 Francis and Clare: The Complete Works. New York: The

1) What activities can others do that will cause me to feel upset?
2) Can I really live a better life with fewer possessions?
3) Can I control my temper when others are taking actions that will encourage me to lose
control?
He (Ben Azzai (sic)) used to say: Do not be scornful of any person, and do not be disdainful of anything, for you have no person without his hour, and you have no thing without its place.

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) When have I needed the help of another person whom I had written off as worthless?
2) What benefits do the weeds and bugs in my garden provide?
3) Why did God create the mosquito or the spiked dandelion?
X  The Chastisement of the Body
1. Many people when they sin or receive an injury, often blame the enemy of their neighbor.
2. But this is not right, for as each one has the [real] enemy in his own power; that is, the body through which he sins.
3. Therefore Blessed is that servant (Mt 24:46) who, have such an enemy in his power, will always hold him captive and wisely guard himself against him, because as long as he does this, no other enemy, seen or unseen, will be able to harm him.
   -Saint Francis of Assisi

   Armstrong, Regis J. & Ignatious C. Bradly

1) How am I my own enemy?
2) When have I caught myself acting against my own interests?
3) When do I blame others for my own faults?
4) How can I control my own inclinations to do wrong?
He (Hillel (sic)) also saw a skull floating on the water. He said to it: “Because you drowned others, they drowned you; and eventually those who drowned you will be drowned.”

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) When does hatred and rage begin?
2) What can I do control the cycle of anger in myself and those around me?
3) Since it is so easy to tell when others are overreacting to negative situations, how can I tell when I am overreacting?
4) If I can make someone angry enough to kill, just by cutting them off on the highway, what can I do to spend contentment and joy?
27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,
28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.
29 And unto him that smiteth thee on one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh
away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.
30 Give to every man that asketh of thee: and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them
not again.
31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also likewise.
32 For if you love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those
that love them.
33 And if ye do good to you, what thank have ye? For sinners also do even the same.
34 And if ye lend to them of whom you hope to receive, what thank have ye? For sinners
also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.
35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your
reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the
unthankful and to the evil.
36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.
37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned:
Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:
38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken
together, and running over, shall men give unto your bosom. For the same measure that
ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

Lawson, J. Gilchrist
1913 Precious Promise Testament with Complete Index: Being the
 Winston Company. P. 79.

1) How much effort will it take to give care to those who gave no concern about me?
2) When can I give help to others who mean to do me harm?
3) Can I accept the help of others who mean to do me harm?
4) What do these people expect of me when they give me assistance?
5) Am I willing to reach out to those who truly need my assistance? Why or why not?
Luke 5:30b-32
30b Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?
31 And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.
32 I came not to call the righteous but the sinners to repentance.

Lawson, J. Gilchrist

1) Why do I find it so hard to be in the company of people with whom I disagree?
2) What steps am I willing to take to understand these people?
3) What do I really expect for making the effort to learn from them?
Matthew 7:7-10

7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it will be opened unto you: 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10 Or if he ask for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

Lawson, J. Gilchrist

1) Do I really know what I want from others?
2) Do I know the best ways to ask others for what I want?
3) Would I want to be asked for something in the same manner?
4) How would I want others to ask or treat me if they wanted something from me I value?
The Bigger Picture

...craft recognizes that we are all interdependent, and even the most avid member of the “me generation” must ultimately serve the life force, if only as compost.

Starhawk (Simos, Miriam)


1) How can I see goodness in even the most worthless of my opposition?
2) If I can not see anything good in my opposition, can they see anything good in me?
3) What added value will I leave to this world as a monument to my existence?
4) What daily decisions do I make that affect the moods of others?
What is the Lesson?

In early times in Japan, bamboo and paper lanterns were used with candles inside. A blind man, visiting a friend one night, was offered a lantern to carry home with him. “I do not need a lantern,” he said. “Darkness or light is all the same to me.” “I know you do not need the lantern to find your way,” his friend replied, “but if you don’t have one, someone else may run into you. So you must take it.”

The blind man started off with the lantern, and before he had walked very far someone ran squarely into him. “Look out where you are going!” he exclaimed to the stranger.

“Can’t you see this lantern?”

“Your candle has burned out brother,” replied the stranger.

Reps, Paul & Nyogen Senzaki

1) Why do I give others advice? Is it for their good or mine?
2) How could I best help my friends?
3) Where is the third man’s lantern?
4) Who is responsible for the collision and how could it be avoided? (Hint, all three people are responsible.)
Proverbs 17:6
The Crown of elders is grandchildren; and the glory of children is their parents.

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) Where do I fit into this equation?
2) How are my parents my glory?
3) As my grandparents have passed, how can I continue to feel their love?
4) By harming my relatives, do I also harm myself?
Rabbi Yishmael says: Be yielding to a superior, pleasant to the young and receive every person cheerfully.

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) How much effort would it take for me to smile at strangers as we pass?
2) If I can not always tell who are my “superiors” or “the young,” how can I be yielding and pleasant to everyone without feeling ‘used’ by others?
3) If I enjoy being greeted and treated as an old friend or person of importance, why do I find it difficult to treat others in the same manner?
4) Do any of these apply to my peers, equals or siblings?
You shall not hate your brother or sister in your heart. Rather, you must reason with your kin, so that you do not incur guilt on their account. But you must not seek vengeance, nor bear a grudge against your kin; you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.

Stern, Chaim

1) If I can not forgive my siblings for the past, how can I truly forgive myself?  
2) If I can forgive those closest to me, i.e. those who can do me the most harm, why can I not forgive the stranger who cuts me off in traffic?  
3) Why do I find it so hard to leave the last cookie for my family, when I know they love as much as me? Who should get to eat the last treat in the cupboard?  
4) How do I forgive my family when they take something I wanted?
Matthew 5:22
22 But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca*, shall be in danger of the council: But whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Lawson, J. Gilchrist

* Raca: Anger breaking forth into an expression of scorn (Raca) to be punished by the Sanhedrin (to sunedrio, “the council”)

Edwards, D. Miall

1) Why is internal unexpressed anger a sin?
2) Why do I permit myself to use insults?
3) How do I judge others when I see them acting in an angry manner?
4) How do I act differently from others when I am angry?
He is my brother.
I disagree with him on everything.
If I see white, he sees black.
Where I see virtue, he will see sin.
When I see grief, he will see hope.
For all this, there is one reality I can not change:
He is my brother.
We are born of the same family.
We experienced many similar events.
We are different yet similar.
Where others will not understand me, he will at least expect my reactions.
He is my brother.

-Author

1) Why is it hardest to make peace with those closest to me?
2) Why do we pick fights with each other out of habit and boredom?
3) How should I expect him to act toward me differently, if I treat him the same way everyday?
If any brother falls ill, wherever he may be, let the other brothers not leave him behind unless one of the brothers-or several of them, if that is necessary-is designated to serve him as “they would want to be served themselves.” In case of the greatest need, however, they can be entrusted to some person who should do what needs to be done for his sickness.

Saint Francis of Assisi

Armstrong, Regis J.

1) How would I like to be cared for when I am sick or injured?
2) Am I willing to give these same treatments for those around me when they are sick or injured?
3) In whom would I trust the care for myself, spouse or children?
4) What have these people done to earn my trust?
5) Am I willing to make the same efforts in care and trust that I am asking of other people?
Luke 14:8-11
8 When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him.
9 And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lower room.
10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.
11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased: and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Lawson, J. Gilchrist

1) In situations where I have been embarrassed, what could I have done to have avoided the discomfort?
2) Have there been times when I have been complimented, but I was not expecting praise?
3) What would happen if everyone avoided the high table?
4) How would I feel if I sat at the lowest table and was left there? Could I still enjoy the company of those around me?
Let those who are placed over the others glory in such a position as much as they would if they were assigned a position of washing the feet of their brothers. If they are more upset at having their place over others taken away from them than loosing their position at their feet, the more they store a money bag to the peril of their soul (cf. John 12.6).

-Saint Francis of Assisi

Armstrong, Regis J.

1) How do I feel inside when I am placed into a position of authority?
2) How do I feel when others are given authority over me?
3) How would I treat my assistant if I knew that next week he or she will be my supervisor?
When a mood against someone or for someone arises, do not place it on the person in question, but remain centered.

Reps, Paul & Nyogen Senzaki

1) Who is responsible for my anger?
2) Who is responsible for my actions?
3) What is ‘centered’ and how do I achieve it?
Deuteronomy 23 (8)

You shall not abhor an Edomite;

Altogether-although the Edomites deserve your enmity since they went to war against you.

You shall not abhor an Egyptian.

Altogether-although the Egyptians cast your male children into the river. Why should you not abhor them altogether? Because, in all events, the Egyptians gave hospitality to the Hebrews at a time of great need during the years of famine in the time of Joseph.

-Rashi

Pearl, Chaim


1) Other than myself, who is my most potentially dangerous adversary?
2) What grudges do I hold against this person?
3) What would it take for me to forgive this adversary?
4) What would it take for my adversary to forgive me?
When stuck in traffic, remember the golden sayings:
1) I will get there, when I get there.
2) I am not the most important person in this parking lot.
3) I can choose to either use this time to stress or relax. The choice is mine.
Repeat as necessary
   -Author

1) Why is driving such a cause of stress in my life?
2) When I see another driving being rude or breaking the law, why do I feel this gives me license to act in a similar manner?
3) Often when I encounter other drivers, I think how much easier it would be if everyone just drove like me. When I then encounter drivers who have my habits, I find them more irritating than those around them. How do I explain this paradox?
Leviticus 19 (18)

You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge.

What is the meaning of vengeance? The Rabbis give the following illustration: If one says to another, “Hand me your scythe,” and the man refuses to lend it, and the next day the man who refused says to the first man, “Lend me your ax.” (sic) and first man says, “Since you did not lend to me, then I will not lend to you,” this is taking vengeance.

An Example of bearing a grudge is as follows: One man says to another, “Lend me your ax,” and the second man refuses. But the next day this second man says to the first, “lend me your scythe.” At this the first man says, “Here, take it! I am not like you who refused to lend me yesterday.” This is an example of bearing a grudge, since he keeps the grudge in his heart although he does not take vengeance.

you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Rabbi Akiba said, “This is a fundamental principal of the Torah.”

-Rashi

Pearl, Chaim


1) Do I harbor any grudges toward others?
2) Are these grudges helping or hurting me?
3) How can I release these grudges?
4) If I can learn to release my anger, will I then be better able to control my own emotions?
Rabbi Yishmael [Rabbi (sic) Yose bar Chalafta’s] son says: one who withdraws from judgement removes himself from hatred, robbery and [the responsibility for] an unnecessary oath, but one who is too self confident in issuing legal decisions is a fool, wicked, and arrogant of spirit.

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) Why do I find it easy to judge celebrities, the famous, or newsworthy who have little or no impact on my life?
2) Why do I have such high confidence in my decisions and so little in those with whom I disagree?
3) Can I make it through one day without making a cynical judgment about another person?
Am I involved?

It is not my custom to consider myself chief judge or to pass final decisions. Far be it from me to consider myself a prominent authority of the Law. If I were in your midst, I would vote with you to permit this matter; but who am I to take myself authority elsewhere; a little man like myself whose importance is slight, an orphan of orphans.

-Rashi

Pearl, Chaim

1) If even the mightiest of great thinkers are so humble, why do I need my ego?
2) Who are my heroes? Who were their heroes?
3) If I can learn to accept my current situation, what strength does that give me?
4) When was the last time I “agreed to disagree” with another?
From: The Chapter of Misbelievers

In the name of the merciful and compassionate God. Say ‘o ye misbelievers! I do not serve what you serve; nor will ye serve what I serve; nor will I serve what ye serve; nor will ye serve what I serve;-ye have your religion and I have my religion!’

-The Koran

Palmer, E. H.

1) Why do I need others to think as I do?
2) Can I accept that other people may think differently, and neither of us need be wrong?
3) Can I see beauty in ideas and beliefs I do not share?
4) If others have good ideas, does this make my beliefs less meaningful?
We gaze up at the same stars, the sky covers us all, the same universe encompasses us. What does it matter what practical system we adopt in our search for the truth? Not by one avenue only can we arrive at so tremendous a secret.

-Symphachus, 383 C.E.

Alder, Margot

1) What about learning new or different ideas causes me discomfort?
2) When do I feel safe enough to listen or explore different ideas?
3) Is there any reason why there can only be one way to make peace, find contentment or reach out to God?
Leviticus 19 (17)

You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.

The final phrase in this verse is not an independent teaching but is a condition for what precedes. Scripture teaches that you shall surely rebuke your fellow when necessary, but you should not do it in such a way to shame him in public.

-Rashi

Pearl, Chaim

1) What is the difference between friendly advice and harsh criticism?
2) How would I prefer others to tell me when I have done wrong?
3) Why do I not try to treat others in this same manner?
4) Why do I find it so easy to judge my kin, when I do not understand their situation?
Judge not, Less Thy be Judged
Gessen was an artist monk. Before he would start drawing or painting, he always insisted upon being paid in advance, and his fees were high. He was known as the “Stingy Artist.”
“How much can you pay?” Replied the girl, “but I want you to do the work in front of me.”
So on a certain day Gessen was called by the geisha. She was holding a feast for her patron.
Gessen with fine brush work did the painting. When he was completed he asked the highest sum of his time.
He received his pay. Then the geisha turned to her patron, saying: “All this artist wants is money. His paintings are fine but his mind is dirty; money has caused it to become muddy. Drawn by such a filthy mind, his work is not fit to exhibit. It is just about good enough for one of my petticoats.”
Removing her skirt, she then asked Gessen to do another picture on the back of her petticoat.
“How much will you pay?” asked Gessen.
“Oh, any amount,” answered the girl.
Gessen named a fancy price, painted the picture in the manner requested, and went away.
It was later learned that Gessen had these reasons for desiring money:
A ravaging famine often visited his province. The rich would not help the poor, so Gessen had a secret warehouse, unknown to anyone, which he kept filled with grain, prepared for those emergencies.
From his village to the national shrine the road was in very poor condition and many travelers suffered while traversing it. He desired to build a better road.
His teacher had passed away without realizing his wish to build a temple, and Gessen wished to complete this temple for him.
After Gessen had accomplished his three wishes he threw away his brushes and artist’s materials and, retired to the mountains, never painted again.

Reps, Paul & Nyogen Senzaki

1) We all judge, but are we always aware that we are judging others?
2) Are my judgments always accurate?
3) How can I be less critical of the actions of others?
4) If I can be less critical of others, can I also be less critical of myself?
Shmuel HaKattan said: When your enemy falls do not be glad, and when he stumbles let your heart not be joyous, lest Hashem (literally translates to “The Name,” a reference to God (sic)) see it and it displease Him, and He turn His wrath from him [to you] (Proverbs 24:17-18).

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) Why should I not rejoice when my enemy stumbles, falls, or embarrasses him or herself?
2) Why do I find it so hard to reach out to these people during their time of need?
3) When I make a mistake, why do I first check to see if anyone saw me, while when others make the same mistakes I expect then to show contrition or remorse?
Repentance and the Day of Atonement suffice for forgiveness of sins against God alone, but sins against human beings, such as violence or cursing or theft, are not forgiven until restitution is made and the injured person satisfied. And restitution itself is not enough; one must appease the injured person and ask forgiveness. By the same token, an injured person must not be cruel and unforgiving. We should be slow to anger and easily appeased. And when our forgiveness is requested, we should grant it with a whole heart and a willing spirit; we should not be vengeful or bear grudges even for a grave injury—this is the way of the upright…

Stern, Chaim

1) When I verbally forgive someone, why do I sometimes still feel anger in my heart?
2) If I am asking too much of a person, are they obligated to meet my demands?
3) If I have been wronged to my core by a person, even if they never ask me for forgiveness, what atonement might they do to earn my forgiveness?
4) Am I willing to do this same atonement for my own actions?
Now, just as both kinds of beauty delight and arose desire, so does ugliness give rise to shame in both cases. For a person is ashamed of the fact that he is a pauper, or that he has a deformed body, or that he is ignorant, or that he performs disorderly actions, therefore, since every interior ugliness must always be held in contempt, everything that involves shame arising from this kind of ugliness must be disapproved. The confession of sins is not an instance of this, because the penitent is not ashamed of the act of confessing but of the sin the confession reveals.

-Saint Thomas Aquinas

Aquinas, Saint Thomas

1) Can I humble myself by admitting to my true faults?
2) Can I attempt to address these faults, fail gloriously, and yet still try to address them again?
3) What is the relationship between beauty and virtue?
4) How can I learn which of my faults can be successfully addressed and turned into strengths?
Any love that depends on a specific cause, when that cause is gone, the love is gone; but if it does not depend on a specific cause, it will never cease…

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) Have I ever “befriended” someone because they had a “toy” I wanted?
2) Can I love someone who owns nothing of financial worth?
3) Why do I love the people I do, while loathing others?
4) I might say, “I do not hate anyone?” but would those I treat poorly agree?
All Life on Earth participates in the dance of Moon and Sun. And we, engendered in the oceans, feel in our blood the pull of our Moon upon the tides. We are sunlight transformed by trees into fruit and plasm, and we are so intimately of the Earth that our collective dream is paradise. Thus we are moved to celebrate the ceaseless play of the seasons and to ensoul ourselves, landscape and heaven.

-Frederick Adams

Alder, Margot

1) How do I depend on the natural processes around me?
2) When do I thank those individuals and groups who work so hard to provide me with a simple meal in the morning?
3) Is all life interconnected? How does God use, manipulate or enhance these relationships to give us a good life?
Blessed is the person who supports his neighbor in his weakness as he would want to be supported were he in a similar situation (cf. Gal. 6:2; Matt. 7:12)... Blessed is the servant who loves his brother as much when he is sick and cannot repay him as when he is well and can repay him.

-Saint Francis of Assisi

Armstrong, Regis J.

1) When have I depended on the kindness of others?
2) What have I done to deserve this kindness?
3) Am I willing to help others when I know there is no chance of ever being repaid?
4) How much effort am I willing to give for another if I will never be repaid?
5) On a night of frigid rain, I am traveling alone down a long highway by myself. I see a car pulled over by the side of the road. Outside of the car a person is bent over the engine and there are others inside the car? What would I do for these people? What have I done in the past? What would I want others to do for me, if I were the one with the car problems?
6) Do I offer others more if I enjoy their company or hope to spend time with them in the future?
You can deny, if you like, nearly all abstractions: justice, beauty, truth, goodness, mind, God. You can deny seriousness, but not play…Play only becomes possible, thinkable and understandable when an influx of mind breaks down the absolute determinism of the cosmos.

-Johan Huizinga

Alder, Margot


1) When was the last time I lost track of time watching a child play?
2) When was the last time I permitted myself to play, imagine or use objects in new ways?
3) When did I quit playing like a small child? Why did I let it happen?
4) When was the last time I permitted myself to believe that I could make a difference in other peoples’ lives?
“Prayer of St. Francis”
Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon (sic).
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console:
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive-
It is in pardoning we are pardoned.
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Preces-Latinae
http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/Sancti/SFranciscusAssisiensis/PrayerofSF.html

A point of interest: This is commonly called the Prayer of St. Francis or St. Francis’ Prayer for Peace. However, there is no historical evidence that this prayer was actually written by the great man. It first appeared in an Italian church prayer. It was attributed to St. Francis by Cardinal Spellman in the middle of the twentieth century. This was over 700 years after St. Francis’ death.

Armstrong, Regis J. & Ignatious C. Brady

1) Would the actual author of this prayer feel it a compliment or insult that his work is attributed to such a great person?
2) How can I, one person, bring love where there is hatred?
3) When have I pardoned those who have truly hurt me?
4) When I have hurt others, am I willing to take these same steps to earn their pardon?
Chapter 5 THE RULES OF CONFLICT

If I can not avoid conflicts, I should probably study how they work and understand the rules. If I refuse to learn the rules of conflict, debate and rhetoric I will have lost my way before I can even get started.

“WAR IS SWEET TO THE INEXPERIENCED”—in Latin, delce bellum inexpertis-first shows up, in the fifth century B.C., in one of Pindar’s Dance Songs, in which he adds that “he that has experience of it sorely fears in his heart its approach.”

Macrone, Michael

1) Do I go looking for conflicts?
2) Can I listen to someone support an idea I disagree with, without challenging them?
3) Do I really understand all of the possible outcomes from my choices?
4) From what I have experienced of war and fighting, for what causes or beliefs am I willing to go through this suffering?
5) When is it appropriate or not appropriate to challenge an idea or cause?
Therefore those who win every battle are not skillful-those who render others’ armies helpless without fighting are the best of all.

-Master Sun

Sun Tzu

1) How can I win without fighting?
2) What is the best use of my efforts?
3) How can I convince those who want to work against me, to work with me?
Making Enemies from Friends

Once a division of the Japanese army was engaged in a sham battle, and some officers found it necessary to make their headquarters in Gasan’s temple. Gasan told his cook: “let the officers have only the same simple fare we eat.”

This made the army men angry, as they were used to deferential treatment. One came to Gasan and said: “Who do you think we are? We are soldiers sacrificing our lives for our country. Why don’t you treat us accordingly?”

Gasan answered sternly: “Who do you think we are? We are soldiers of humanity aiming to save all sentient beings.”

Reps, Paul & Nyogen Senzaki

1) What forms can a personal sacrifice for others take?
2) Are any of these sacrifices worth more than others?
3) Is it more important to be willing to die for my city, state or nation; or is it more important to live for them?
4) What sacrifices have I made in the past? What sacrifices am I willing to make in the future? Am I making these sacrifices for myself or others?
Matthew 12:25
25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Even a Kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation: and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

Lawson, J. Gilchrist

1) When have I made choices which are in my own interests, but against the interests of those closest to me?
2) When can I accept my own imperfections, and when must I battle my imperfections?
3) When I act against those closest to me, how am I also acting against myself?
4) How can I get others to work with me for a compromised goal with as much effort as they would for their own unshared wishes?
Weapons are the tools of fear; a decent man will avoid them except in direst necessity and, if compelled, will only use them with the utmost restraint. Peace is his highest value. If peace is shattered, how can he be content? His enemies are not demons, but human beings like himself. He doesn’t wish them personal harm. Nor does he rejoice in victory. How could he rejoice in victory and delight in the slaughter of men?

He enters a battle gravely, with sorrow and with great compassion, as if he were attending a funeral.

Mitchell, Stephen

1) Why must I turn my opponents into monsters?
2) How can I learn to see delight in something other than a clear victory?
3) What is my greatest possible victory in my current situation?
The Ideal Outcome of this Conflict

The general rule for use of the military is that it is better to keep a nation intact than destroy it. It is better to keep an army intact than to destroy it, better to keep a division intact than to destroy it, better to keep a battalion intact than destroy it, better to keep a unit intact than destroy it.”

-Master Sun

Sun Tzu


1) What is my definition of victory in a conflict?
2) Will this victory cost me more in the future?
3) Can I use my opponents’ efforts to assist me?
4) Do I need to destroy others’ pride to win?
5) How can I keep my venom and pride from allowing me to overact against my enemies?
Who is In Charge Here?

The general rule for military operations is that the military leadership receives the order from the civilian leadership to gather armies.

Let there be no encampment on difficult terrain. Let diplomatic relations be established at the borders. Do not stay in barren or isolated territory.

When on surrounded ground, plot. When on deadly ground, fight.

-Master Sun

Sun Tzu


1) Do I always have to be in charge of everything?
2) How do I know when I am taking on difficulties I can not handle?
3) Do I know when others will be better at diplomacy than I?
4) Can I avoid conflicts where I am weakest?
How High are Your Walls?

This is why high walls and deep moats do not guarantee security, while strong armor and effective weapons do not guarantee strength. If an opponent wants to hold firm, attack where they are unprepared; if opponents want to establish a battlefront, appear where they do not expect you.

-Master Sun

Sun Tzu


1) How do I currently defend myself against others?
2) Are these defenses effective?
3) Can I ignore their attacks, or do I think about them long after the event?
4) Are strong defenses always effective?
5) How do I advertise to others where I am weak?
When a country is in harmony with the Tao [the way],
the factories make trucks and tractors.
When the country goes counter to the Toa [the way],
warheads are stockpiled outside the cities.

There is no greater illusion than fear,
no greater wrong than preparing to defend yourself,
no greater misfortune than having an enemy.

Whoever can see through all fear will always be safe.

Mitchell, Stephen

1) How do I make my weapons obvious to everyone?
2) Why do I need to appear aggressive toward others?
3) How can I learn to feel safe when in danger, confident in the presence of others?
Matajuro Yagyu was the son of a famous swordsman. His father, believing that his son’s work was too mediocre to anticipate mastership, disowned him.

So Matajuro went to Mount Futara and found there a famous swordsman Banzo. But Banzo confirmed the father’s judgment. “You wish to learn swordsmanship under my guidance?” asked Banzo. “You cannot fulfill the requirements.”

“But if I work hard, how many years will it take to become a master?” persisted the youth.

“The rest of your life,” replied Banzo.

“I can not wait that long,” explained Matajuro. “I am willing to pass through any hardship if only you will teach me. If I become your devoted servant, how long might it be?”

“Oh, maybe ten years,” Banzo replied.

“My father is getting old, and soon I must take care of him,” continued Matajuro.

“If I work far more intensively, how long would it take me?”

“Oh, maybe thirty years,” Banzo replied.

“What is that?” asked Matajuro. “First you say ten and now thirty years. I will undergo any hardship to master this art in the shortest time!”

“Well,” said Banzo, “In that case you will have to remain with me for seventy years. A man in such a hurry as you are to get results seldom learns quickly.”

“Very well,” declared the youth, understanding at last he was being rebuked for impatience, “I agree.”

Matajuro was told to never speak of fencing and never to touch a sword. He cooked for his master, washed his dishes, made his bed, cleaned the yard, cared for the garden, all without a word of swordsmanship.

Three years passed. Still Matajuro labored on. Thinking of his future, he was sad. He had not even begun to learn the art to which he had devoted his life. But one day Banzo crept up behind him and gave him a terrific blow with a wooden sword.

The following day, when Matajuro was cooking rice, Banzo again sprang upon him unexpectedly.

After that, day and night, Matajuro had to defend himself from unexpected thrusts. Not a moment passed in any day that he did not have to think of the taste of Banzo’s sword.

He learned so rapidly, he brought smiles to the face of his master. Matajuro became the greatest swordsman in the land.

Reps, Paul & Nyogen Senzaki


1) For whom do I seek my glory? To whom am I trying to prove myself?
2) Is my own need for instant results, working against me?
3) Do I really understand all the lessons this story is teaching? (read it again)
4) Why do I find it so difficult to learn and master the mundane knowledge or skills?
Where to start?

So in the cases of those who are skilled in attack, their opponents do not know where to defend. In the case of those skilled in defense, their opponents do not know where to attack…Be extremely subtle, even to the point of formlessness. Be extremely mysterious, even to the point of soundlessness. Thereby you can be the director of the opponent’s fate.

-Master Sun

Sun Tzu


1) Where am I best able to defend my position?
2) Where am I at my weakest?
3) Where are my adversaries best able to protect their position?
4) Where are my adversaries at their weakest?
5) How can I be flexible in my arguments?
What Are They Doing?
   When the enemy is near but still, he is resting on a natural stronghold. When he is far away but tries to provoke hostilities, he wants you to move forward. If his position is accessible, it is because this is advantageous to him.
   -Master Sun

Sun Tzu

1) How do I know when I have the advantage?
2) How do I know when I do not have the advantage?
3) When should I accept where I am, and wait for others to respond?
4) Can I be quiet and listen to those signs around me?
When Should I Hurry?

Those who are first on the battlefield and await their opponents are at ease; those who are last on the battlefield and head into battle get worn out…Therefore good warriors cause others to come to them, and do not go to others.

Sun Tzu

1) Why do I go looking for conflicts?
2) How do other people appear or actions do they take when they are looking for a conflict?
3) What can I do to select my conflicts only in areas where I am stronger?
4) What methods can I use to control the conflicts in which I engage?
From Where Should I Attack?
   When Fire is set upwind, do not attack downwind.
   -Master Sun

Sun Tzu

1) Do I really want to risk burning myself by my own attack?
2) Do I know where I am in the bigger picture?
3) If I start a fire here, will it burn the land where I will make my stand?
4) Can I control the situation I am about to start?
Matthew 26:52
52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Lawson, J. Gilchrist

1) What about self defense?
2) When should I put up my sword and when do I need to draw it?
3) If I bring a weapon with me, does it mean that I am expecting to need it?
4) What kind of weapons am I comfortable carrying? Why?
5) What weapons am I carrying now? Why?
6) If I carry no weapons openly, do I appear weak and invite attack?
Their Mistake

Draw them in with the prospect of gain, take them by confusion.
-Master Sun

Sun Tzu

1) When have I been the victim of this proverb?
2) Have I ever used this idea against others?
3) How would I know this trap was laid before me?
4) How can I avoid this pitfall?
How Long?

When you do battle, even if you are winning, if you continue for a long time it will dull your forces and blunt your edge; if you besiege a citadel, your strength will be exhausted. If you keep your armies out in the field for a long time, your supplies will be insufficient.

-Master Sun

Sun Tzu


1) How long should I dedicate to this fight?
2) Is the conflict worth the time and energy I have or will need to invest?
3) Is there a better way to solve this problem quicker?
4) Would my resources provide me with a better reward if they were invested somewhere else?
A Trojan Horse
    Those who come seeking peace without a treaty are plotting.
    -Master Sun

    Sun Tzu

1) Am I being offered a real gift?
2) What do the others expect to gain from me?
3) Can I accept what is being offered to me?
4) Am I being overly paranoid?
What Do They Want
    Those who come in a conciliatory manner want to rest.
    -Master Sun

Sun Tzu
    1988 *The Art of War: Translated by Thomas Cleary*. Boston: Shambhala
    Publications, Inc. P. 139.

1) Am I ready to accept what others offer me?
2) Does ‘rest’ equal peace?
3) Can we use this time to solve problems?
4) Am I ready to accept this ‘gift?’
From: Chapter of the Believer
But if they retire from you and do not fight you, and offer you peace, then God hath given you no way against them.
- The Koran

Palmer, E. H.

1) How can I accept a peace offering from someone who has made me so angry?
2) Am I a traitor to my own past, if I make peace in my present?
3) Can I accept that others can change? Can I change my own behavior toward them?
4) How would I know if someone was honestly offering me a new beginning?
5) How do I know when old conflicts should be ignored for my own benefit?
Buddha told a parable in a sutra:

A man traveling across a field encountered a tiger. He fled, the tiger after him. Coming to a precipice, he caught hold of the root of a wild vine and swung himself down over the edge. The tiger sniffed at him from above. Trembling, the man looked down to where, far below, another tiger was waiting to eat him. Only the vine sustained him. Two mice, one black and one white, little by little, started to gnaw away the vine. The man saw a luscious strawberry near him. Grasping the vine with one hand, he plucked the strawberry with the other. How sweet it tasted!

Reps, Paul & Nyogen Senzaki

1) How can I gain a sense of victory in the most difficult of situations?
2) Have I examined all of my possible escapes or routes?
3) How can I focus on the few good things in a really bad day?
Goals

Therefore one who is good at martial arts overcomes others’ forces without battle, conquers others’ forces without battle, conquers others’ cities without siege, destroys others’ nations without taking a long time.

-Master Sun

Sun Tzu


1) Why is a quick victory so important in a disagreement?
2) Why is it so important for me not to destroy my adversary?
3) Who is my true adversary in most situations?
The goal of my journey is not just to avoid conflicts or to better understand how I relate to those around me; the ultimate goal must be to find a consistent joy in my heart and satisfaction with my actions. Since I have come too far in my thoughts, I can no longer accept the joy in ignorance. Now I must find the steady joy within myself that comes from living a good and beautiful life.

Proverbs 3: 13-18
13 Happy is the man who finds wisdom,
The man who attains understanding.
14 Her value in trade is better than silver,
Her yield, greater than gold.
15 She is more precious than rubies;
All of your goods can not equal her.
16 In her right hand is the length of days,
In her left, riches and honor.
17 Her ways are pleasant ways,
And her paths, peaceful.
18 She is a tree of life to those who grasp her,
And whoever holds on to her is happy.

Greenburg, Moshe; Jonas C. Greenfield & Nahum M. Sarna

1) Of whom or what is this writing about?
2) Does one ever truly master “wisdom” or is it really a daily struggle?
3) Why do we compare wisdom and understanding to earthly wealth?
4) What are the steps to gain such valuable wisdom?
Chapter 1 Mishnah 14
He (Hillel (sic)) used to say: If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) What does this mean to me?
2) How often can I think about this without becoming neurotic?
3) How do I find a healthy day to day balance between the needs of others and myself?
4) What daily choices do I make to improve my behavior?
Everything is foreseen, yet the freedom of choice is given. The world is judged with goodness, and everything depends on the abundance of good deeds.

- Rabbi Akiva

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) How can God know everything and still give us freedom to make our own choices?
2) Does God know all of the possible outcomes from my choices?
3) How can I learn to predict the outcomes of my choices?
4) If the world depends on good deeds, what role do I play in these actions?
A Simple Prayer
Most High, glorious God
enlighten the darkness of my heart
and give me
correct faith, certain hope,
and perfect love,
sense and Knowledge,
Lord, that I may carry out
Your holy and true command.
-Saint Francis of Assisi

Armstrong, Regis J.

1) What does perfect love feel like?
2) What would I look for in something I would call “correct faith?”
3) How do I know when an action is a holy act and not an abomination?
He (Rabbi Gamliel (sic)) used to say: Treat His will as if it were your own will, so that He will treat your will as if it were His will. Nullify your will in the face of His will, so that He will nullify the will of others in the face of your will.

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) In difficult situations, how do I know what God wants?
2) How difficult is it for me to put the will and wants of others before my own?
3) If I want what is best for the most people, does this make me more or less likely to get what I want?
Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov said; he who fulfills even a single mitzvah (commanded good deed (sic)) gains himself a single advocate, and he who commits even a single transgression gains himself a single accuser. Repentance and good deeds are like a shield against retribution.

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) When put in these words, why do I find it so difficult to stop for a moment in my busy life and help others in need?
2) Does God care about the social standing of my advocates, if they be rich man or poor?
3) Why do I find it so easy to ignore or discredit my accusers?
4) If doing good, showing love, and helping others give me such positive feelings of self worth, why do I not take these activities more often?
He [Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah] used to say: Anyone whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds, to what is he likened? - to a tree whose branches are numerous but whose roots are few; then the wind comes and uproots it and turns it upside down, as it is said: And he shall be like an isolated tree in an arid land and shall not see when good comes; he shall dwell on parched soil in the wilderness, on salted and uninhabitable land (Jeremiah 17:6). But one whose deeds exceed his wisdom, to what is he likened? – to a tree whose branches are few but whose roots are numerous; even is all the winds in the world were to come and blow against it, they could not budge it from its place, as it says: And he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, spreading its roots toward the stream, and it shall not notice the heat’s arrival, and its foliage shall be fresh; in years of drought it shall not worry, nor shall it cease from yielding fruit (Jeremiah 17:8).

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman  

1) How strong would my tree be?  
2) What actions can I take to strengthen my metaphorical tree?  
3) Looking back at my past difficulties, what lessons have I learned from them?  
4) Have I taken the actions or made the changes these lessons suggested?
Ben Zoma says: Who is wise? He who learned from every person, as it is said: From all my teachers I grew wise (Psalms 119:99). Who is strong? He who subdues his personal inclination, as it is said: He who is slow to anger is better than a strong man, and a master of his passions is better than a conqueror of a city (Proverbs 16:32). Who is rich? He who is happy with his lot, as it is said: When you shall eat of the labor of your hands, you are praiseworthy and all is well with you (Psalm 128:2). You are Praiseworthy – in this world; and all is well with you – in the World to Come. Who is honored? He who honors others; as it is said: For those who honor Me I will honor, and those who scorn Me shall be degraded (I Samuel 2:30).

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) When was the last time I permitted myself to learn a valuable lesson from someone I thought was a complete idiot?
2) What temptations are too hard for me to resist? Why are these so difficult to me, but so easy for others?
3) How did I show honor to the last person with whom I had a conversation?
Seven traits characterize an uncultivated person and seven a learned one. A learned person does not begin speaking before one who is greater than he in wisdom or in years; he does not interrupt his fellow; he does not answer impetuously; he asks relevant questions and replies appropriately; he discusses first things first and last things last; about things he has not heard he says, “I have not heard”; and he acknowledges the truth. And the reverse of these traits characterizes an uncultivated person.

- The Mishnah

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) How often do I listen to others to hear what I can learn?
2) When was the last time I gave a quick answer to a question, only to regret it later?
3) When can I admit aloud, “On this subject, I am ignorant?”
4) How have I set the priorities in my life?
He [Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa (sic)] used to say: If the spirit of one’s fellows is pleased with him, the spirit of the Omnipresent is pleased with him; but if the spirit of one’s fellows is not pleased with him, the spirit of the Omnipresent is not pleased with him.

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman  

1) When was the last time I let my conscious change my choice of actions?  
2) What is different between the conscious that tells me to act, instead of the one that tells me not to act?  
3) How often do I listen to my conscious and how often do I ignore it?  
4) For whom do I work hardest to earn their praise and why?
Exodus XX:12
Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Hertz, J. H.

1) What is the difference between honor and love?
2) How can I honor my parents, even when I do not feel they honor me?
3) Why does honoring my parents increase my life?
4) Can I honor these people, without agreeing with them?
Rabbi Eliezer says: Let your fellow’s honor be as dear to you as your own, and do not anger easily; repent one day before your death; warm yourself by the fire of the sages, but beware of their glowing coal lest you be scorched – for their bite is the bite of a fox, their sting is the sting of a scorpion, and their hiss is the hiss of a serpent, and all their words are like fiery coals.

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) Why do I need to be more careful listening to those I respect?
2) If I do not know the day of my death, when should I repent? How can I do this constantly without questioning my self-worth?
3) If another person challenges my honor, will I be enraged? How can I challenge another person without causing them to have similar non-constructive anger?
4) Should I always permit the goals of my teachers to be my own?
MLK
Sleep,
sleep tonight,
and may your dreams,
be realized.
If the thunder cloud
passes rain,
so let it rain:
rain on me.
So let it be.

U2

1) What are my obligations toward the dreams of those who came before me?
2) What are the obligations of those who follow me to fulfill my dreams?
3) How can I expect others to fulfill my dreams, if I am not willing to work on the
dreams of those who preceded me?
4) Am I obligated to live my life as a role model?
Mathew 5:3-10
3 Blessed are the poor in spirit for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.
4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
5 Blessed are the meek: for they will inherit the earth.
6 Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.

Lawson, J. Gilchrist

1) What are the virtues of being poor or needing to work?
2) How can I realistically see the meek “inherit the earth?”
3) How do others treat me if they want to keep me calm?
4) How can I treat others in a similar manner?
Nothing in Excess

Young men err in everything by excess and vehemence, contrary to the perception of Chilon: they do all things too much, since they love and hate too much, and likewise in everything else. They fancy and insist that they know all things, and this is why they overdo everything.

-Aristotle, Rhetoric, Book2, chapter 12

Chilon was a Spartan magistrate of the sixth century B.C., whose legendary wisdom earned him a place among the Seven Sages of Greece (sic). Aristotle attributes the maxim, “Nothing in excess” to Chilon, and it is a cornerstone of Aristotelian ethics…”Moderation in all things” are his watchwords (sic).

Macrone, Michael

1) Do I know when I have gone too far?
2) How can I recognize those feelings within myself?
3) If there are times when moderation is not appropriate, how will I know them?
4) When do I need to moderate my good actions?
He [Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa (sic)] used to say: Anyone whose good deeds exceed his wisdom, his wisdom will endure; but anyone whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds, his wisdom will not endure.

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) I know many actions I could take to help others, which ones will do the most help?
2) Which actions am I more likely to take?
3) How do I balance between learning how best to help others and actually doing the work of helping?
4) How and when did I learn to help others?
5) How can I teach my children to want to help others?
Another Idea

And Hillel summed up the Torah (law (sic)) in this maxim: What is hateful to you, do not do to others. The rest is commentary: you must go and study it.

Stern, Chaim


1) Do I really understand how I want others to treat me?
2) What behaviors do I despise in others?
3) Do I tolerate these behaviors in myself?
4) Why do I have to study these laws of human behavior?
5) Why can I not just act properly out of instinct?
6) Why is proper behavior so complicated?
On Responsibility

Our Rabbis taught: Six hundred and thirteen commandments were given to Moses. Micah reduced them to three; “Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.”

Stern, Chaim


1) Do I ever obey the details of the law, while ignoring the spirit or purpose for the law?
2) How can I do justly in my daily life?
3) If we are all servants, why do I think I am so important? Why does everyone else think they are also important?
4) How can I show mercy when the driver behind me is impatient and the car in the fast lane, who cut me off five minutes ago, wants to get over to the exit?
5) Where in my life do I most need to show patience and fairness?
Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel says: The world endures on three things – justice, truth, and peace, as it is said: *You shall adjudicate the verdict of truth and peace at your gates* (Zechariah 8:16).

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman  

1) How can I work for justice in my daily activities…like traffic?  
2) How can I expect others to be honest with me, when I am comfortable using, ‘little white lies’ to protect myself?  
3) How can others be honest with me, when I am not honest with myself?
Deuteronomy 24 (17)

**You shall not pervert the justice due to the stranger, or to the fatherless.**

And with regard to the rich, the Bible has already warned (Deuteronomy 16:19): “You shall not wrest judgment.” Scripture repeats the law here with respect to the poor in order to make the transgressor liable under two negative commandments. The special emphasis is indicated here because it is easier to do injustice to the poor.

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Pearl, Chaim


1) Is there any among us who is perfect?
2) If I am to judge others, can I do it with open eyes and with a goal of learning from them?
3) Can I treat my neighbor with the un-mowed lawn and weeds with the same courtesy I show my other neighbors who hire a gardening service?
Leviticus 19 (15)

**You shall do no unrighteousness in Judgment;**

This shows that a judge who perverts justice is called *avel* (“unrighteous”)—a synonym for “abomination.”

**you shall not respect the person of the poor,**

A judge shall not say: “This man is a poor man, while the other is rich and is obliged to support the poor; so I will find in favor of the poor man, and the results will be a means of support from the rich man.”

**nor favor the person of the mighty;**

The judge shall not say: “This one is rich and is of noble descent. How can I put him to shame and see his disgrace?”

**But in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.**

Taking the words simply, they mean that the judge has to apply strict justice. Another rabbinic explanation takes the word *tzedek* to mean “merit,” implying that the judge shall judge his fellow man “in the scale of merit,” giving him the benefit of the doubt.

-Rashi

Pearl, Chaim


1) Do the wealthy have a greater capacity and/or obligation to show ‘merit?’
2) Should I let my personal gardener help the family who has to work a sixty hour week to afford their rent?
3) Are the poor under the same obligation as the rich to show ‘merit?’
4) Who am I to judge the potential of others and how well they fulfill their obligations?
Justice Shall you Pursue

…justice is an inner sense that each act brings about consequences that must be faced responsibly. The Craft (sic) does not foster guilt, the stern, admonishing, self-hating inner voice that cripples action. Instead, it demands responsibility.

Starhawk (Simos, Miriam)

1) What is the difference between positive constructive criticism and destructive admonishment?
2) How can I encourage others to make positive changes without causing them insult?
3) How can I encourage myself to make positive changes without causing self hatred?
Where there is charity and wisdom,
    there is neither fear nor ignorance.
Where there is patience and humanity,
    there is neither anger nor disturbance.
Where there is poverty and joy,
    there is neither greed nor avarice.
Where there is rest and meditation,
    there is neither anxiety nor restlessness.
Where there is fear of the Lord to guard an entrance (cf. Luke 11:21),
    there the enemy can not have a place to enter.
Where there is a heart full of mercy and discernment,
    there is neither excess nor hardness of heart.
- Saint Francis of Assisi

Armstrong, Regis J.

1) How do I agree or disagree with this statement?
2) Are the goals expressed here similar to my own?
3) How can I strengthen these positive traits?
“These are the obligations without measure, whose reward, too, is without measure:
To honor father and mother;
to perform acts of love and kindness;
to attend the house of study daily;
to welcome the stranger;
to visit the sick;
to rejoice with bride and groom;
to console the bereaved;
to pray with sincerity;
to make peace when there is strife.”

Central Conference of American Rabbis  

1) How can I honor those people who cause me frustration?  
2) How and why should I study daily?  
3) What does praying have to do with community relations?  
4) I am already so busy; how can I fit any of these activities into my crowded schedule?
Hillel says: Do not separate yourself from the community; do not believe in yourself until the day you die; do not judge your fellow until you have reached his place; do not make statements that cannot be easily understood, on the ground that it will be understood eventually; and do not say, “When I am free I will study,” for perhaps you will not become free.

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) Why should I not separate myself from others?
2) Will I ever really understand things from the point of view of another person?
3) Do others understand what I am trying to ask of them?
4) How can I best phrase my requests so that I am most likely to get what I want?
Shimon his son says: All my days I have been raised among the Sages, and I found nothing better for oneself than silence; not study, but practice is the main thing; and one who talks excessively brings on sin.

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) How can I practice virtue daily?
2) How do I know when to listen silently and when to argue my case?
3) Has my talking ever gotten me into trouble?
4) When should I listen carefully to what I am saying?
Rabbi Yehoshua says: An evil eye, the evil inclination, and hatred of other people remove a person from the world.

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) What is an evil eye?
2) How can these negative actions remove me from the world?
3) How can I control my own thoughts and dreams?
Rabbi Elazar HaKappar said: Jealousy, lust and glory remove a man from the world.

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) Why do I seek glory for myself and not for others?
2) After what do I lust?
3) Why do I find it difficult in my heart to see others gaining status and awards?
From: The Chapter of Women

There is no good in most of what they talk in private; save in who bids almsgiving, or kindness of reconciliation between men; and whoso does this, craving the good pleasure of God, we will give him mighty hire.

-The Koran

Palmer, E. H.

1) Why do my good intentions come to so little?
2) Why is reconciliation as important as charity?
3) These steps sound so easy; why do I find it so difficult to perform at the levels I expect of myself?
Teachers and Lessons

Yamaoka Tesshu was a tutor of the emperor. He was also a master of fencing and a profound student of Zen.

His home was the abode of vagabonds. He had but one suit of clothes, for they kept him very poor.

The Emperor, observed how worn his garments were, gave Yamaoka some money to buy new ones. The next time Yamaoka appeared he wore the same outfit.

“What became of the new clothes, Yamaoka?” asked the emperor.

“I provided clothes for the children of Your Majesty,” explained Yamaoka.

Reps, Paul & Nyogen Senzaki

1) What can I truly afford to give away?
2) What can I truly afford to keep?
3) Am I as generous now as I want to be?
4) What can I give to others, without harming myself?
Ryoken, a Zen master, lived the simplest kind of life in a little hut at the foot of a mountain. One evening a thief visited the hut only to discover there was nothing to steal. Ryokan returned and caught him. “You may have come a long way to visit me,” he told the prowler, “and you should not return empty handed. Please take my clothes as a gift.” The thief was bewildered. He took the clothes and slunk away.

Ryokan sat naked, watching the moon. “Poor fellow,” he mused, “I wish I could have given him this beautiful moon.”

Reps, Paul & Nyogen Senzaki

1) Why do I long for missing items I never used when I had them?
2) Why do I get so upset when others take away my control over my possessions?
3) I know I should share with others, so why is letting go of things so hard?
4) If I am willing to share material things, why do I guard my spiritual valuables?
Exodus XX:8-11
8. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
9. Six days shalt thou labour, and do thy work;
10. but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the LORD thy God, in it you shall not do any
manner of work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-
servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates;
11. for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and
rested on the seventh day; wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Hertz, J. H.

1) So, why do I feel guilty if I let myself rest for five minutes?
2) What kind of discipline is required to allow myself a proper sabbath?
3) How can I avoid making other people work for me on a sabbath?
What is needed?

[118] For an individual man to lead a good life two things are required. The first and most important is to act in a virtuous manner (for virtue is that by which one lives well); the second of which is secondary and instrumental, is a sufficiency of those bodily goods whose use is necessary for virtuous life. Yet the unity of man is brought about by nature, while the unity of the multitude, which we call peace, must be procured through the efforts of the ruler. Therefore, to establish virtuous living, in a multitude three things are necessary. First of all, that the multitude be established in the unity of peace. Second, that the multitude thus united in the bond of peace, be directed to acting well. For just as a man can do nothing well unless unity within his members be presupposed, so a multitude of men lacking the unity of peace will be hindered from various action by the fact that it is fighting against itself. In the third place, it is necessary that there be at hand sufficient supply of things required for proper living, procured by the ruler’s efforts.

Saint Thomas Aquinas

Aquinas, Saint Thomas

1) Does this passage make more sense to me if I replace the word multitude with group, and the word ruler with leader?
2) How can one have spiritual peace, if we are starving, freezing or uncomfortable?
3) If I as the leader can not provide enough resources to please everyone, how can I make the others pleased with what we have?
Zengetsu, a Chinese master of the T’ang dynasty, wrote the following advice for his pupils:

Live in the world yet not forming attachments to the dust of the world is the way of a true Zen Student.

When witnessing the good actions of another encourage yourself to follow his example. Hearing of the mistaken actions of another, advise yourself not to emulate it. Even though alone in a dark room, be as if you were facing a noble guest. Express your feelings, but no more expressive than your true nature.

Poverty is your treasure. Never exchange it for an easy life.

A person may appear a fool and yet may not be one. He may only be guarding his wisdom carefully.

Virtues are the fruit of self discipline and do not drop from heaven of themselves as does rain or snow.

Modesty is the foundation of all virtues. Let your neighbors discover you before you make yourself known to them.

A noble heart never forces itself forward. Its words are as rare gems, seldom displayed and of great value.

To a sincere student, every day is a fortunate day. Time passes but never lags behind. Neither glory nor shame can move him.

Censure yourself, never another. Do not discuss right and wrong.

Some things, though right, were considered wrong for generations. Since the value of righteousness may be recognized after centuries, there is no need to crave immediate appreciation.

Live with cause and leave results to the great law of the universe. Pass each day in peaceful contemplation.

Reps, Paul & Nyogen Senzaki

1) What parts of this advice ring true to me? Why?
2) What parts of this advice do not ring true to me? Why?
3) Can I really live ethically, while ignoring the interpretations of others?
4) How can I permit myself to “leave results to the great law of the universe”?
Matthew 16:26
26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Lawson, J. Gilchrist

1) Is my honor worth the small price of honesty?
2) When I get something improperly free, will I have to pay for it another time?
3) When do I act improperly because I believe I will never be caught?
4) When do I act properly even though I had no witnesses?
He [R’ Tarfon] used to say: You are not required to complete the task, yet you are not free to withdraw from it. If you have studied much Torah (Holy Law (sic)), they give you great reward; and your Employer can be relied upon to pay you the wage of your labor, but be aware that the reward of the righteous will be given in the World to Come.

Lieber, Moshe & Nosson Scherman

1) How many tasks have I not started out of fear of not finishing?
2) How many greater tasks would I start if only I gave myself permission to fail gloriously?
3) What tasks would I start if I knew that eventually I would be rewarded for these efforts?
4) Why do I need the promise of rewards or success to motivate me into these efforts?

Now if I am truly brave, I will start back at the beginning.
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