

Hexagram 4 – Learning



The seeker.

Spiritual influence benefiting all.

In-no-way I seek the undeveloped seeker.

The undeveloped seeker seeks me

The initial oracle-consulting notifies me.

Twice, thrice: obscuring.

Obscuring, by consequence not notifying.

Benefit from asking the oracle and accepting the results.

Ideogram: A covered plant, hidden growth.

Structure: Danger within ☵☶ and keeping still outside ☶☶. Mountain above water.

Image: A mountain gives rise to a spring. When water first rises out of the ground, it does not know its way, but the water steadily fills up the deep places blocking its progress and then necessarily flows on.

Stopping in perplexity at the brink of a dangerous abyss describes the confusion of those at the beginning of the path. Because they do not know which way to proceed, beginners experience whatever arises through the lens of their conditioned selves. They rely upon their habituated reactions to get them through the struggles of life, often stumbling into ever greater dangers.

Many live within such a confused state of being their whole lives. Those without a spiritual path remain ignorant as they never learn and practice the wisdom needed to live a meaningful life. Those filled with self-importance and a deluded sense of their specialness will find it difficult to accept the teachings of others. An overflowing cup cannot hold more water.

Only when students want to overcome their willingness to harm others do they open themselves to the wisdom and guidance of a teacher. Confusion at the beginning of the path does not cause harm if it leads us to find a wise teacher to help us understand and practice the spiritual values and skills needed to free ourselves from conditioning and cultivate our sacred responsibility to care for Earth Interbeing.

The teacher has the responsibility to nurture the student's sense of wholeness with the Earth Interbeing and point to the common responsibility to care for Earth Interbeing. Thus, the teacher needs to encourage the learner's wholeness as a being within community. The gift of having someone we trust penetrate our ignorance with understanding inspires a profound gratitude for the teacher.

In a community of equals, no one can order another about. However, neither can someone depend on another to do its work nor for excessive support as that gives the other control over them. A whole person does what needs doing on its own without someone asking them to do it. Such people perceive what would benefit others or the community and will take action if necessary. The strong can provide for themselves without having to ask for the help of others. They have many skills, which they put to good use.

The whole person has respect for the wholeness, strength, and knowledge of others. Thus, they refrain from imposing their will upon others as that would diminish the others' wholeness, strength, and knowledge. When they make mistakes, they learn from them and make amends for any harm they inflict upon others.

The strong discern the needs of others and offer them support in ways that does not diminish the other. Making the other ask for help before helping them diminishes the other as they become needy. Telling the other what to do diminishes both the one who could help but did not act on the discerned needs of others and the one asking for help. Whole people model needed skills so that others can learn the skills. Rather than telling the one needing help what to do, the whole person offers options with their likely consequences to give the other a choice.

The I Ching models the ideal relationship of wholeness between the teacher and learner. We show our readiness to learn from the I Ching by our openness and respect for its instruction. The I Ching does not offer itself as a teacher but rather waits for the confused to ask for its teachings, the correct relationship between a student and teacher, which ensures the readiness of the student. In return, the student receives from the teacher constancy in instruction, patience, and understanding.

Before we can fully open ourselves to the teachings of the I Ching, we need to come to trust its wisdom and guidance, a trust that blossoms into faith over the years. We may never fully fathom the I Ching, but it offers its knowable wisdom to all who seek it.

When we approach the I Ching with a sincere desire for its wisdom, it makes itself available as a guide. We learn how to investigate our life lessons, the struggles that present themselves, to see what we must learn to further our spiritual path. The Book of Changes teaches how to free ourselves of our cultural conditioning: freedom from deluded appearances and beliefs, freedom from self-image and individuality. Once delivered from our cultural conditioning, we have wholeness with the Earth Interbeing and discern the path to caring for it.

Those who play with life never amount to anything. Beginners must learn the seriousness of being. The teacher nurtures the learners sense of morality and Earth limits through example and deepen the learner's understanding through practicing the virtues: love, moral and Earth limits, wisdom, and acting to care for the Earth Interbeing. While society has laws to restrain the conduct of those not on the path, the sage voluntarily adheres to the ways of the spirit, which makes right relationships possible within all our interactions.

Using lived experiences as teaching moments, we learn Earth Interbeing morality and how to have a moral discipline. We learn the consequences of exceeding or ignoring such limits. The student and teacher persevere in the instruction until the student masters the points one by one. Those who follow the I Ching demonstrate what they have learned by practicing these lessons in their lives.

In teaching others, everything depends upon consistency. Only through repetition can the pupil master the teachings. Just as water flows on and on, sages make use of practice and repetition in teaching. Teachers gradually deepen their guidance, leading students further on their spiritual path until they penetrate reality deeply and have no doubts.

Questions naturally arise when confused or learning a new skill. Asking the teacher questions helps to penetrate confusion. Someone without questions or curiosity really does not want to learn. When we ask the I Ching questions with complete sincerity and total presence, we receive a response that cuts through ignorance. The seeker then accepts the instruction as a key for resolution of doubt and an insight into the way forward.

However, we need to limit our questioning and not overstep bounds with thoughtless or mistrustful queries. The oracle gives one answer and refuses to respond to questions implying doubt. Repetitive

questions reflect a lazy attitude that annoys the teacher, who refuses to entangle itself in the student's doubt and self-cherishing.

The I Ching expects those who have freed themselves from harmful cultural conditioning and have wholeness with the Earth Interbeing to bring forth the ways of the spirit in caring for creation. Rather than escape from the struggles of the world, accomplished sages have the holy duty to transform what harms Earth Interbeing with others.

The wise see life as a learning experience. They seek the sacred within the moment, opening and responding to experience in beneficial ways. The spiritual path provides the bridge over which we must cross for liberation from I-ness so to have wholeness with the Earth Interbeing. We learn that every step of the path contains the whole path. What we learn from each lesson opens us ever more to the sacred love within the moment. Moving through an immediate challenge in a loving way has the same movement as the cosmos.

We begin the path as self-cherishing individuals with hostility for others and indifference to the suffering we cause. We come to see ourselves as unique within the whole of Earth Interbeing and with the purpose to serve all life and the Earth, creating opportunities for others to do the same. Living in the ways of the spirit becomes an established attribute of our being rather than an isolated occurrence.

A stream begins to flow down a mountainside. It moves through every challenge in its path until at last the stream becomes the ocean. When we experience everything with awareness, everything becomes our teacher.

Line 1: When the willingness to harm arises, the wise immediately see through it into a loving presence. Letting the self have its way opens the line to regret. Seekers at the beginning of the spiritual path often take things carelessly, but the teacher shows them the seriousness of life. Those without a spiritual path or sense of morality become subject to laws and punishments to deter them from harming others.

Line 2: The line opens to feelings that nurture its relationships within Earth Interbeing. It firmly restrains harmful and dangerous impulses and dissolves them within a loving presence. Those who responsibly manage their thoughts and feelings can competently move through difficulties and dangers.

Line 3: Harmful feelings and thoughts overwhelm the line in a reaction to a situation. The wise do not throw their dignity and wholeness away but rather curb their compulsive thoughts and feelings. They do not over-react to situations.

Line 4: The weak line, surrounded by weak lines, gets entangled in empty imaginings and ignorance and with others who also have lost themselves in their delusions. The line does not know it needs to seek out spiritual wisdom to break through its ignorance.

Line 5: The line seeks instruction and yields to wise counsel. The seeker, devoid of arrogance, submits itself devotedly to the teacher.

Line 6: In freeing ourselves from our conditioning, we do not use the ways of what harms. Instead we resist our conditioning through imposing upon ourselves Earth and moral limits and by creating the conditions that move us towards caring for the Earth Interbeing.