

Hexagram 4 – Learning



The seeker.

Spiritual influence benefiting all.

In-no-way I seek the seek.

The 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 it 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 filters of their conditioned self-centered selves and rely upon their habituated reactions to get them through life difficulties, often causing harm.

Many people live in a delusional self-centered state their whole lives. Those without a spiritual path remain ignorant as they never learn and practice the wisdom needed for a meaningful life. The arrogant find it difficult to accept the teachings of others; an overflowing cup cannot hold more water. The self-centered cause their own suffering. If we do not care for others but attack them, then others attack us.

The I Ching expects accomplished sages to share their wisdom in the world in ways that care for the Earth Interbeing. Rather than transcend the struggles of the world, accomplished sages have the holy duty to transform what harms Earth Interbeing. Teaching the path of wholeness with the Earth Interbeing fulfills that duty¹.

Only learners motivated to overcome their separation from the sacred open themselves to the wisdom and guidance of a teacher. Confusion at the beginning of the path does not cause harm if it motivates us to find a wise teacher to further us on our spiritual path. A teacher introduces us to the wisdom and practices needed to free ourselves from our self-centeredness and to cultivate our interbeingness. The gift of having someone we trust help penetrate our ignorance with understanding inspires a profound gratitude for the teacher.

¹ **The Ways of the Sacred Earth Interbeing:** We worship the sacred through our care for Creation. We interbe with Creation, relating to all with equality, respect, and care so that life continues and thrives on Earth. We know the sacred ways for Creation to continue and thrive and to overcome what keeps us apart. We know and respond to the mutual neediness of life in ways that further the harmony of Earth Interbeing. We know and care for our place as the ground upon which we preserve the balance of Earth Interbeing by reciprocating for what we take through our stewardship of the Earth Interbeing. We live within interbeing's moral boundaries and Earth limits and learn from our life lessons how to overcome what keeps us apart. We live as unique beings in the ways of the Earth Interbeing to preserve Creation's harmony and balance and to overcome what keeps us apart. We respond to whatever we experience in the ways of the Earth Interbeing and hold ourselves accountable for our actions. (12/23/24)

Teachers discern the needs of others and respond in ways that respect the seeker. They carefully avoid imposing their will on the student. Rather than telling the one needing help what to do, the teacher presents options and their likely consequences to give the other a choice. Teachers help students learn from their mistakes, but students have the responsibility to make amends for any harm they inflict upon others and resolve not to make the same mistake again.

Those who play with life never amount to anything. Beginners must learn the seriousness of being. The teacher nurtures the learner's recovery of living within moral bounds and Earth limits through example. The seeker deepens its understanding of this balance and harmony through 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 sacred ways, which makes right relationships possible within all our interactions.

Seekers have the responsibility to practice what they learn, to do their own work. They cannot depend upon the teachers to provide excessive support for that would give the teacher control over them and their path.

In teaching others, everything depends upon consistency. Only through repetition can the seeker master the lessons. Just as water flows on and on, sages make use of practice and repetition in teaching. Teachers gradually deepen their guidance, encouraging students to further their spiritual path until they penetrate reality deeply and have no doubts. The student and teacher persevere in the instruction until the student masters the points one by one.

The I Ching opens to seekers open and respectful for its instruction. The I Ching does not promote itself as a teacher but rather waits for the seeker to come to it and ask for its teachings. For those ready for the I Ching to help guide them on their spiritual path, the seeker receives from the teacher constancy in instruction, patience, and understanding. We come to trust its wisdom and guidance, a trust that blossoms into faith over the years. The I Ching offers its wisdom to all who seek it.

The I Ching helps us to investigate our life lessons, to respond to difficulties in ways that benefit all, to unfold what furthers our spiritual path. The Book of Changes teaches how to free ourselves from deluded appearances, harmful beliefs and conditioned selves. Once free, we have wholeness with the Earth Interbeing and know how to fulfill our purpose to care for the Earth Interbeing. Those who follow the I Ching demonstrate what they have learned by practicing these lessons in their lives.

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. The I Ching teaches change and transformation.

However, we need to limit our questioning and not overstep bounds with thoughtless or mistrustful queries. We approach the I Ching not to predict the future but for guidance on our path here and now. The oracle gives one answer and refuses to respond to questions implying doubt. Repetitive questions reflect a stubborn attitude that annoys the teacher, who refuses to entangle itself in the student's doubt and self-cherishing.

Many have written their own interpretations of the I Ching from their own point of view. Some focus on how to succeed in our ambitions. Others speak to how to transcend the world. The I Ching of Earth Interbeing guides seekers to overcome our willingness to harm others for self-benefit and then ignore the suffering we cause so that we can fulfill our sacred duty to care for the Earth Interbeing.

The wise see life as a learning experience. Using what we experience as teaching moments, we learn Earth Interbeing morality and how to live within those bounds. We learn the consequences of exceeding or ignoring limits. We 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 self-centeredness to 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 interbe as unique being 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 self-centered act rashly, they suffer the consequences of their harmful actions. At first, the seeker conforms to a strict discipline imposed by the teacher. When the seeker's spiritual being matures and a moral discipline becomes internalized, the teacher relaxes the external discipline. Rash action leads to humiliation while self-discipline benefits all.

Line 2: The teacher patiently and gently helps the seeker unfold its spiritual being. In this way, the seeker overcomes its self-centeredness and becomes wise.

Line 3: The seeker loses its own path through its servility to its teacher. This does not benefit either the seeker or the teacher. Students should never lose their dignity and integrity by allowing the teacher to impose its will upon them.

Line 4: The weak line gets entangled in empty imaginings and ignorance. The teacher, unable to dispel the student's delusions, distances itself from the student until the student comes back to its senses. Holding to folly ends in humiliation.

Line 5: The line seeks instruction and yields to wise counsel. The seeker, devoid of arrogance, remains rooted in the sacred path and opens itself to wisdom.

Line 6: Those who stubbornly adhere to their harmful beliefs and denies the wisdom of experience behave in ways that harm the Earth Interbeing. They will suffer the consequences. The wise benefit all by not transgressing moral bounds and Earth Interbeing limits.