

CHAPTER ONE:

TOUGH LOVE FOR SEEKERS

My seventy-six-year-old mother from Oklahoma has the personality of Lucille Ball and the intellect of Archie Bunker's wife Edith, from the TV show "All in the Family." A few years ago, after my father died, I thought it would be a good time to broach the tender subject of death and dying with my mom.

Doyle: "Mom, how do you feel about dying? Are you afraid at all?"

Mom: "No, I'm not afraid to die. But I'm a little worried."

Doyle: "Really, what worries you about dying?"

Dead serious, my mom says: "All of my life I've been a good person so I know I'm going to heaven, but I don't want to go there if it's full of Christians."



This book is a basic lesson in metaphysical uncommon sense and an advanced course in spiritual philosophy.



Those Who Will Understand this Book

In the late twentieth century, I received a phone call from a woman who had seen one of my books in a bookstore and generously offered to introduce me to her literary agent. Because I had stopped acquiring my spiritual beliefs from others ten years prior, I didn't know who she was, but I was flattered when I learned she was a very famous spiritual lecturer and best-selling metaphysical author.

Curious, and uncomfortable with my envy of her literary success, I attended one of her lectures and found her to be charismatic, entertaining, and a great speaker. However, most of her ideas were classic metaphysical/Eastern religious beliefs that I had first heard thirty years earlier. Plus—and with all due respect—I knew for a fact that many of the statements she made about spiritual growth were simply untrue.

After the lecture, I asked some friends for their opinions of her talk and was surprised to hear how much they learned. I had difficulty understanding why so many people were excited about decades-old New Age information.

Over the next few months I talked to many people who were familiar with the author's work and I received similar replies. However, when I asked "veteran seekers"—those who dedicated most of their lives to their spiritual search—I found that their amazement mirrored my own.

We eventually concluded that millions of spiritual seekers were for the first time hearing metaphysical beliefs that we initially heard in the 1960s and '70s. And although we naively thought it was cutting-edge information back when we first heard it, much of it had actually been

around since the 1920s, when it was called New Thought. And who knows how long it had been around before that. Moreover, the rest of the metaphysical ideas were only recycled linguistically modernized ancient Hindu and Buddhist beliefs that were first conceived when the earth was flat.

Veteran seekers were also bewildered by the content of most metaphysical books that made it to the bestseller list every year. We knew from personal experience that a good deal of it was just perennial metaphysical hype that came and went like diet fads. Although temporarily inspiring, those titles ultimately served only to distract seekers from their real spiritual growth.

Over the next fifteen years I talked to countless seekers and discovered that even though each person's path is unique, most seem to fit into one of five stages of philosophical development. Moreover, although the amounts of time and dedication that a person spends on his or her path are significant factors, these factors do not determine which stage a seeker is currently in. Most seekers stay near the same stage for their entire lives, while the philosophies of a very few evolve. I also realized that seekers can listen until they are blue in the ears, but nothing can shift them to the next stage until they are ready to move on.

Some believe our souls may be thousands of years old, so our earthly chronology is not necessarily an indication of how far we have advanced spiritually. Some believe that people evolve lifetime after lifetime from barbarians to angels and then they can choose to start from the beginning again as barbarians simply for the joy and challenges of growing and learning. If even remotely true, then being in a hurry to grow spiritually seems futile. Who cares what stages we

go through or where we are? What does it matter?

One benefit of wisdom is joy, and enjoying *this* life matters. Most of us would love to be twenty-one again, but not if we had to go back to our twenty-one-year-old minds. Most of us are happier now because of what we have learned. Elders say that the more-wisdom-equals-more-joy equation never ends—the more people learn, the happier they are.

In addition, if seekers are serious about their spiritual growth then they need to know if the paths they have taken worked for them and if the path they are on now is heading in the right direction. Seekers can do this by recognizing their achievements and shortcomings and by foreseeing potential challenges.

Listed below are the first five stages of philosophical evolution that many, if not most, advanced seekers go through in their search for spiritual growth. It is rare to find an individual with a tight-knit, well-defined philosophy. It is the inexact and uncertain nature of ideologies that cause most people to have some conflicting spiritual beliefs. As a result, not all seekers fit neatly into one stage, most have some beliefs in one or more.

Those in the first stage are called accepters rather than seekers, because they tend to accept what they are told rather than seek out the facts. Those in stage two are called novice seekers; they can get the most benefit from this book but, unfortunately, I do not think most them are prepared to understand it. The goal of this book is to motivate seekers in each stage to advance to the next, while planting seeds for further advancement.

For those unfortunate seekers like myself who are inclined to think in absolute terms, there is a tendency to begin each stage with a fundamentalist's dogmatic philosophy about one's newfound

discoveries. These types of people are at the greatest risk of becoming stuck in that stage, while others eventually outgrow it and move on.

The First Five Stages of Philosophical Growth

Stage 1: Those in the survival toddler stage are accepters.

Stage 2: Those in the infatuated child stage are novice seekers.

Stage 3: Those in the disillusioned adolescent stage are casual seekers.

Stage 4: Those in the purging adult stage are career seekers.

Stage 5: Those in the peaceful elder stage are veteran seekers.

The rest of this chapter describes the first five stages of philosophical development. Most people in the first two stages might not be prepared to take this course because they are still struggling to survive, while seekers in the later stages are struggling to evolve. The prerequisites for this course are evolving beyond the first and second stages; because only those in the third stage and above will be prepared to understand it.

The fifth stage is more detailed in a later chapter.