

## Lessons from the Teacher

## DAY ONE: Orientation

On Monday, the Teacher, Tasselus, called the class to order, took the roll and began his lecture:

“Students, do you know what I’m going to talk about today?”

They answered him: “We have no idea.”

The Teacher responded: “Well, if you have no idea at all, then what’s the use of my talking to you?”

With that the Teacher picked up his notes and left the classroom.

On Wednesday, the Teacher called the class to order, took the roll and began his lecture:

“Students, do you know what I’m going to talk about today?”

They answered him: “Yes, we do.”

The Teacher responded: “Well, if you already know, then what’s the use of my telling you?”

With that the Teacher picked up his notes and left the classroom.

On Friday, the Teacher called the class to order, took the roll and began his lecture: “Students, do you know what I’m going to talk about today?”

This time they were ready, having discussed their answer in advance in the snack bar: “Some of us do, and some of us don’t.”

The Teacher responded: “In that case, let those who do tell those who don’t.”

With that the Teacher picked up his notes and left the classroom.

When he got his monthly check the Teacher couldn’t understand why the Dean had docked him a week’s pay.

## DAY FOUR: Very Like a...

And the Teacher desired to instruct in the way of a parable. He asked them to gather around his desk and blindfolded them. Since an elephant would not fit through the door, he placed his dog, Zohar, on the table and asked each to touch it and tell him what it was.

One student touched the tail and declared: “It is very much like a Dog.”

Another scratched the head and declared: “It is very much like a Dog.”

The third brushed its back and declared: “It is very much like a Dog.”

And the last shook its paw and declared: “It is very much like a dog.”

Then the Teacher exclaimed: “Congratulations! You have all appropriately felt and accurately described the essence of Dog. Now, what breed is it?”

And the students began to quarrel among themselves as to what “kind” of Dog they had experienced until the Teacher stopped them: “When you were blind to the differences you all correctly sensed the basic nature of Dog. Yet you quickly fell into dissension over the specifics. Now, trust in your inner eye, go forth into the world and try not to be stupid.”

#### DAY FIVE: Religion Is Like a Pizza

When the Teacher entered the classroom two students were still debating their positions on the “Essence of Dog” analogy from the previous class. After giving each of them a time-out, he tried to interject some ecumenical harmony back into the discussion.

“Think of religion like a pizza,” he began. “Pizza manifests in many forms, but the denominational heart of *all* pizzas is the trinity of Crust, Sauce, and Cheese.

“Pizza comes in many sizes and shapes with diverse doctrinal toppings, and wars have been fought over appropriate devotional cheeses. Some still cling to the traditional crust; some have converted to New Age thinness; while others have evolved to the pretentious piety of double-stuffed crusts.

“But at their fundamental, artery-clogging essence, they all emanate from the same primordial baker. Only a Minion of Lasagna would deny the unifying power of pizza.”

### DAY SEVEN: The Unanswerable Question

And a student named Donald waived his hand in the air like a bunny on crack and said: “Teacher, I’m going to ask you a question. Can you answer it?”

And the Teacher replied: “Please ask your question.”

And the student snickered and said: “I’ve already asked it.”

And the Teacher, knowing that the student was a smart ass, replied: “I’ve already answered it.”

And the student looked puzzled and asked: “What did you answer?”

And the Teacher fired back: “What did you ask?”

And the student gave up: “I asked nothing.”

And the Teacher smiled: “And I answered nothing. Now let me ask you a question: Who’s on first?”

### DAY NINE: Childish

And the Teacher suddenly looked up from his lecture notes from which he had been droning on and on for half an hour and said: “When I was a child, I spoke as a child; I understood as a child; I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things.

“And Eric, if you don’t stop playing Grand Theft Auto on your computer, I’m going to throw your laptop out the window.”

### DAY TWELVE: The Good of the Few

And the Teacher was called to the Dean’s office again to answer some complaints.

“Some students have objected that you are teaching dead white men.”

The Teacher scratched his ear and said: “Huh?”

“Shakespeare and Milton and T.S. Eliot.”

“So?”

“They think it is colonialist and offensive to people of color.”

“Ok.”

“And they don’t want to take any tests or be graded or at least don’t get a grade below a C.”

“But that encourages them to do mediocre work.”

“Doesn’t matter. It increases their anxiety. They say if you don’t change, they want me to fire you. What do you have to say for yourself?”

But Tasselus, who had tenure, replied: “I say we tell the students to suck it up or leave. This isn’t day care.”

The Dean stammered: “But they are many and you are one.”

“Absolutely. There are thousands of colleges that will coddle to their needs. I am but one old man alone. At my age where will I find another job?”

With that, the Dean sighed, closed the Teacher’s file, and motioned him out the door.

#### DAY THIRTEEN: Zhuang Zi Was an Idiot

And the teacher seemed particularly hung over and began to ramble: “Last night I dreamed I was a hamburger sizzling on a grill. Then I awoke and found out I was a man. But what am I in truth? A man who dreams he is a hamburger? Or a hamburger who dreams he is a man? Or am I just full of crap?”

He shook his head and declared: “Zhuang Zi was an idiot.”

One student raised her hand and questioned: “Wasn’t she in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*?”

And another asked: “Is this on the test?”

#### DAY EIGHTEEN: A Byrd in the Hand

And the Teacher plugged his twelve-string guitar into his Gibson amp and began to sing:

“To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven:

A time to sleep and a time to get up;

A time to fight and a time to run;  
 A time to log on and a time to log off;  
 A time to complain and a time to vote;  
 A time to procrastinate and a time to do homework;  
 A time to retire the Stones and a time for their reunion tour.”

And the students responded:

“Turn! Turn! Turn!”

And the Teacher went into the second verse:

“A time to wax on and a time to wax off;  
 A time to be a Belieber and a time to deport his ass;  
 A time to wear plaid and a time to be sensible;  
 A time to watch The Walking Dead and a time for the Kardashians;  
 A time to bet ‘em and a time to fold ‘em;  
 A time to eat pizza and a time to eat pizza;  
 And a time for paper and plastic together.”

And then the fuse blew.

#### DAY TWENTY: Certitude

One student angrily thrust his hand in the air: “I am a Yugoist. My parents are Yugoists. So were their parents. This is my truth and I resent you asking me to challenge those beliefs.”

And the Teacher scratched his expanding stomach and asked: “Tell me, Rush, do you have a car?”

This set the student back a bit, but his anger was still in his reply: “Damn straight. I got a ’97 Dodge Stratus.”

“You buy the 4- or 6-cylinder?”

“Six. The fours tend to blow the dead gaskets.”

“How did you find it?”

“What’d’ya mean?”

“Did you buy the first car you saw?”

“No. I checked out a dozen other cars before I bought it. I went on the Internet and looked at the safety ratings. Checked Consumer Reports and Kelley’s.”

“What kind of car do your parents own?”

“A 2000 Chevy Malibu.”

“So you own a different model than your parents?”

“Yep.”

“Then don’t you think you should choose your religion as carefully as you did your car?”