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ECHOES OF THE TAO TE CHING

by

June & Jim Spencer

Echoes Of The Tao Te Ching (pronounced Dow De Ching)

consists of this guide book, fifty Chinese coins and a fabric bag. The guide book contains fifty topics distilled from the Tao Te Ching. Each topic is presented with a few sentences translated from the original verses, plus our own interpretation, and a self searching question on that topic. You may use these topics for study, inspiration, a daily focus, or as an oracle. As an oracle, they will not tell you what to do or not to do. They will, however, provide you with a focal point that can help you uncover your own answers. They simply point towards the inner motivations that shape your choices and your life.

Asking A Question:

We have found it most effective to:

- 1) Focus upon a topic.
- 2) Repeat one of the following questions over and over, as you select a coin.

"Do you have any insight on how I could best approach this subject?"

or "What inner quality might need my attention in this situation?"

or "Where shall I focus to best enjoy this day?"

After reading the verses and questions, you will see that none of the responses directly answer such questions as, "Should I move to the country?" or "What career change is the right one for me?" However, they can guide you through your inner turmoil about the topic.

Our purpose, and we believe the purpose of the Tao Te Ching, is to focus on the essence behind the question. Once that has been illuminated, the move or the change become either obvious or unimportant. Our purpose is not to give specific answers for specific situations, but to help people look behind the situation into their own inner wisdom and learn to access their own ability to find the answers they need.

USING THE COINS:

Choosing a coin may be done in many different ways. Our preferred manner is to place all the coins in the fabric bag, shake the bag, and while concentrating on the topic in question, reach into the bag and chose a coin.

The coins are numbered one through fifty to correspond with the fifty topics. After choosing a coin, look up the topic of the same number and then read and reflect upon the ideas offered.

Other methods of choosing are equally reliable. The coins may be turned face down on a flat surface and one selected randomly. The bag may be shaken and tipped until one coin falls out. In addition to the single coin method, three coins could be selected. One designated to focus on what has happened in the past; another on what is happening in the present; and the third on what is called for in the future.

HISTORY:

After the bible, the Tao te Ching is the most widely translated book in the world. It was written somewhere in the sixth century A.D. by a man whose identity is clouded in antiquity. He is referred to only as Lao Tzu, loosely translated as "Old One."

Little is known of this extraordinary philosopher and mystic, other than his job as a keeper of the imperial archives at Loyang, in the Province of Honan.

According to legend, Lao Tzu was going into the desert to live out his remaining years in solitude, away from society, which he considered morally and spiritually corrupt. Yin Hsi, a gate keeper in northwest China, delayed Lao Tzu and persuaded him to write his philosophy for posterity, thereby saving it for generations to come.

The text of the eighty one chapters, or verses, contains only about five thousand words. This length is consistent with Lao Tzu's principle, "He who knows does not talk. He who talks does not know." One of the main themes presented in the Tao Te Ching is that the respect and celebration of the moment, just as it is, is the highest form of life.

THE FIFTY TOPICS:

We have chosen fifty topics as spokes coming from the hub of Lao Tsu's philosophy. Each one is presented in three parts. First the title, number and a terse distillation of what we believe each of the verses represent. Next, written in italics, an interpretation of the actual verse or verses by Lao Tzu.

We do not suggest that the few lines selected from the actual verses encompass the entire meaning of the verse. In many cases they represent only a part. However, we trust they will suffice as a beacon to illuminate and guide your search in one specific direction.

The third part is a somewhat extended version of what we believe is a main theme. There are no suggestions of what to do, or what not to do, where to go, what to choose, or whether or not to remain with the status quo. Each topic ends with a question that we hope you will use to peek into the inner recesses of your heart and find your own answer. Then you will be able to see where you are in balance, or out of balance with the "Tao."

The "Tao" for Lao Tzu, might be translated as, "The Way," or "The path that is in harmony with all nature." Christians might call it, "The way of Christ." Zen Buddhists might say, "Following your own true nature." We like to believe that it means being respectful to, at one with, and nourished by - all things. In short this is following your way of BLISS.

The quoted verses sometimes say, "a man - he," and sometimes, "a wise one - she." We have not done this to appease either sex, but in an attempt to keep with Lao Tzu's philosophy that all true wisdom is in receiving, which is considered feminine. Therefore, whenever we refer to, "the wise one," we use the feminine gender. When we refer to an unidentified person, we use the traditional male - "he."

We hope you will enjoy and benefit from our attempt to share these priceless verses, and that they will not only help you to look at your decisions and desires with new perspectives, but also to look at life through new eyes.

In Lao Tzu's own words - verse #67:

"Some say that this teaching is utter nonsense. Others call it mystical and impractical. But to those who are willing to look inside themselves, this nonsense is useful. And to those who are willing to use it, the mystique has very tangible, far reaching roots."

June & Jim Spencer

#1 MEANING

Nothing "out there" has any meaning other than the one that you project.

The Tao says:

The Tao that can be explained is not the true Tao.

The name that can be named is not the true name.

*When the whole is divided,
the parts need names.*

These names are truly arbitrary.

Consider:

If you remain focused only on the situation, you will be temporarily elated or crushed by what you believe to be the situation.

If you can go beyond the situation into how you feel about the situation, you will be detached from the situation, knowing that the pain and joy come from within.

Keep in mind that it is never the situation to which you are responding.

You are responding to what the situation represents.

Ask yourself:

Are you looking only at the situation, or can you see what it represents for you?

Tao Te Ching Verses #1 #32

#2 POLARITY

Polarities are compliments, not opposites. One can not exist without the other.

The Tao says:

Difficult and easy compliment each other.

Long and short define each other.

High and low support each other.

Whatever shrinks must first expand.

Whatever fails must first succeed.

Whatever is received must first be given.

*That which has no substance
enters where there is no room.*

Consider:

If you are fighting one polarity, you will be eternally running from it while chasing the other and benefitting from neither.

If you celebrate the polarity, you can experience, enjoy and be nourished by both.

If you want something because you enjoy it, the chances are you will get it.

If you want something because you think it will help you avoid something else, you may have a problem.

Ask yourself:

Is your strongest desire for what you want, or what you want to avoid? How much is moving toward? How much is running from?

Tao Te Ching Verses #2 #36 #43

#3 POSSESSIONS

As possessions and ideas are let go, you are fulfilled. As ambitions leave, peace arrives.

The Tao says:

Not collecting possessions prevents stealing.

Not longing after, prevents confusion of the heart.

Weakening ambitions strengthens bones.

The Sage goes on giving

because there is no end to her wealth.

Consider:

If you fight loss, everything must be vigilantly guarded.

Celebrate letting go and you gain more than you desired.

If you are truly enjoying what you have, your life will be filled with enjoyment.

If you are acquiring just to acquire, or trying to protect against loss, you'll make yourself miserable.

Ask yourself:

Are you truly enjoying what you have, trying to protect what you have, or stockpiling things to avoid being without?

Tao Te Ching Verses #3 #77

#4 MERGING

If you leave your separateness and your ego and become one with the moment, your supply is limitless and inexhaustible.

The Tao says:

Loosen the knot, soften the glare.

Merge with the dust, be at one with the earth.

Consider:

If you are fighting to maintain your separation and your ego, nothing that you are will be enough.

When you celebrate merging, everything with which you merge, adds to who you are.

As long as you feel separate from any one thing, or situation, you'll never be able to understand or appreciate it.

If you can see yourself as part of something, then you'll be able to understand it, appreciate it, and even enjoy it.

Ask yourself:

Can you feel yourself as an essential part of the experience and the experience as part of you, or do you feel separate from it?

Tao Te Ching Verses #4 #56

#5 JUDGMENT

Judging good or bad, is seeing an issue with one eye closed.
What seems bad today, may seem good tomorrow.

The Tao says:

*The Tao is like a bellows;
the shape changes but not the essence.
Hold fast to the center.*

*The sage stays behind, thus she is ahead tomorrow.
Being detached, she becomes one with all.*

Consider:

If you are quick to judge good or bad, you will miss truly knowing the thing you judge.

If you celebrate what you see "out there" as a constantly changing process, you'll quickly go beyond judgment.

When you judge something, you stop exploring it any further. Hence, you cannot experience, or learn from it.

Ask yourself:

Are you interested in experiencing, or judging the experience?

Tao Te Ching Verses #5 #7

#6 CREATIVITY

The feminine nature, the willing, is the source of all creativity.

The Tao says:

The Tao is always with you.

You can use it any way you want.

Consider:

While striving to get some specific result, you are not open to creativity.

While being willing to listen and let go of the end result, you are open to all creative alternatives.

Creativity is indifferent to end results.

If your first consideration is creativity, your energy will be in the joy of the process.

If your main consideration is in the end result, you will inhibit your creativity.

Ask yourself:

Are you open to let your creativity guide you, or do you want to manipulate creativity to achieve your own end result?

Tao Te Ching Verse # 6

#7 COMPARISON

When you neither compare nor compete, you are always the winner.

The Tao says:

The supreme good is like water.

It flows in places men reject.

Thus it is like the Tao.

When you are content doing your best,

you don't need to compare.

You are respected by all.

Consider:

If you play to win, losing is an ever present threat.

If you resist being less than the best, second best is an unpleasant possibility.

Winning and losing are not the purpose of the game, only a part of the entire process.

Ask yourself:

Can you make enjoying the game more important than comparing?

Tao Te Ching Verse #8

#8 EXCESS

He who knows he has enough, will always have enough.

The Tao says:

Better to stop short than fill to the brim.

Oversharpen the knife and it will blunt.

There is no greater illusion than fear,

no greater curse than discontent.

Consider:

Fighting missing out or loss, the only view afforded is one of disappointment or misfortune.

Celebrating what you have, provides an exquisite vista of an abundant life.

Joyous are the times when you can be silent and empty and bask in the radiance of the universe pulsing through you.

If you are acquiring more than you need, you are practicing excess.

If you have excess in one field, you will certainly experience lack in another.

Ask yourself:

Do you want something because you need it? Will you truly enjoy it, or will your fear of missing out take first priority?

Tao Te Ching Verses #9 #46

#9 WILLINGNESS

Are you willing to be willing in all things? Supple as a baby with the wisdom of experience?

The Tao says:

Can you embrace all things?

Can you be as supple as a newborn babe?

Having without possessing?

Growing without straining?

Leading without dominating?

Consider:

If you fight to maintain any part of yourself, you are limited.

Nothing less is called for here, than to celebrate the entire spectrum of your being.

You are known, not only by what you say you are, but by what you say you are not.

If you want to be smart, you must also be willing to be stupid.

If you want to be purposeful, you must also be willing to be purposeless.

Ask yourself:

Are you willing, or are you only willing to have it your way?

Tao Te Ching Verse #10

#10 NON-BEING

Non-being is the secret; not being "nothing," but being "no one thing."

The Tao says:

*Thirty spokes are in the wheel;
yet the center hole makes it useful.
Shape clay into a pot;
it is the space inside that makes it useful.
Profit comes from what there is.
Usefulness from what is not.*

*All things arise from being.
Yet, being arises from non-being.*

Consider:

Trying to prove what you are is not being.

Celebrating what is undefinable about yourself is non-being, while at the same time being all there is.

Insisting that you are some one thing will not validate you, or keep you from disappearing.

If you can allow yourself to not have to be any specific thing, then you can become a part of everything.

Ask yourself:

Are you willing to let go of the limits of your ego, your specific self, and redefine yourself as a part of all there is?

Tao Te Ching Verses #11 #40

#11 OBJECTS

Objects are the mirror of what you feel. There is nothing "out there" but a mirror of yourself.

The Tao says:

Five colors blind the eye.

Five sounds deafen the ear.

Five flavors dull the tastebuds.

*The sage is guided by her feelings
not by her five senses.*

Consider:

If you are fighting to find the answer in the situation, you will become lost in the symbols.

If you celebrate how you feel about the situation or symbols, the answer will be obvious.

Ask yourself:

"What feeling does this object, or situation reflect?

What feeling do I want?" (You can't change the object, or situation until you resolve the feelings.)

Tao Te Ching Verse #12

#12 BALANCE

Ups and downs are part of being human. To celebrate both is to live fully.

The Tao says:

*Hope and fear are both part of being alive.
Success could be as dangerous as failure.*

*All things flourish when in balance,
content with the way they are.
When man interferes, equilibrium dissolves
and creatures disappear.*

Consider:

Give and take, contraction and expansion are part of the human process.

When things are not as you wish them - look to find the perfect balance. It is most assuredly there.

You will need to embrace both sides of an issue to find the perfect balance.

Ask yourself:

"Am I willing to open to this, in order to get that? Can I let go of this to receive that? It's all part of the human bargain.

Tao Te Ching Verses #13 #39

#13 LOOKING

What you are looking for is before your very eyes. The light you seek is in your own lantern.

The Tao says:

Look it cannot be seen.

Listen it cannot be heard.

Reach it cannot be grasped.

Consider:

Once you are willing to accept the answer, no matter what it is, you can see eternity.

If you are demanding a specific answer, the resistance clouds your vision.

If you are busy trying to find the answer, especially the one that suits you, you'll be too involved to hear it.

If you sit quietly and openly, you'll hear it.

Ask yourself:

Do you want to hear your answer, or the universe's answer?

If it's the former, you already know it.

If it's the latter, be still and listen.

Tao Te Ching Verse #14

#14 MUDDY WATERS

Often, the only things you see in a situation are the elements that cloud it.

The Tao says:

Can you wait patiently until the mud settles?

Can you remain still until the right action arrives?

Consider:

Wait for your thoughts and feelings to become clear.

Then you may continue with an open heart. While the waters are still muddy, the outcome is uncertain, the situation imperfect.

Quiet your concern with the difficulties so that they may drop away.

Ask yourself:

Are you stirring up the problems so much that the commotion is clouding your vision?

Tao Te Ching Verse #15

#15 SOURCE

Return to the source. Watch the turmoil around you and be at one with your center.

The Tao says:

Empty your mind of everything.

Let your heart rest at peace.

Returning to the source is stillness.

To find the origin, trace back through the offspring.

When you find the source,

amidst all the outer manifestations,

you will be free.

Consider:

Whatever the problem, look to the source.

Ask yourself:

What is really going on here? Be in the moment. What is your true commitment?

Tao Te Ching Verses #16 #52

#16 TRUST

The best leader deals from trust rather than fear.

The Tao says:

He who does not trust will not be trusted.

The Sage leads quietly and easily.

The people then say, "Amazing: we did it, on our own."

When the country is guided,

the people are cooperative.

When the country is ruled,

the people are contrary.

Consider:

When called upon to lead, trust those who follow, and you yourself will be trusted.

When you are trusted, everyone will act as one, and the job will be accomplished.

If you are suspicious of others, you will probably be suspect.

Ask yourself:

Are you willing to trust others, and trust the flow, or is there something inside you untrusting, or untrustworthy?

Tao Te Ching Verses #17 #58

#17 APPEARANCES

When you lack the substance, you are apt to overdo the appearance.

The Tao says:

*When wisdom and intelligence decline
the great pretense begins.*

*When peace is absent from the family
filial piety begins.*

*When goodness is lost,
morality is substituted.*

*When morality is lost,
ritual is the replacement.*

Consider:

Are you putting your energy into the substance, the core of the situation, or is your energy involved with only the appearance - acting "as if"? Only the true substance is fulfilling.

Smiling will not create happiness, but happiness will create a smile.

Are you proceeding because you think it is what you should do, or are expected to do, or it looks right?

Ask yourself:

What do you really want - a safe facade or real substance?
Which is really most important to you?

Tao Te Ching Verses #18 #38

#18 STANDARDS

In trying to live only above standards, you and all around you suffer.

The Tao says:

*Give up sainthood and wisdom,
people will be a hundred times happier.
Give up morality and justice,
and people will do the right thing.*

Consider:

To fight what is below standard, is to create resistance and discomfort.

To embrace what is below standard, is to allow everyone to feel at home.

When everyone feels at home, there is no strife.

Ask yourself:

Is it more important for you to fight what isn't good enough or just enjoy what is?

Is fighting imperfections more important to you than enjoying all of life?

Tao Te Ching Verse #19

#19 ORDINARY

Allowing yourself to be ordinary, is the most extraordinary thing you can do.

The Tao says:

Other people are expectant.

I alone don't care.

I am drifting like a newborn baby before it begins to smile.

I am different.

I am nourished by the great mother.

Consider:

If you are content to do what is ordinary, it may seem strange to others.

While others rush to learn and acquire -eat when you are hungry - sleep when you are tired, you will be at peace.

Almost everyone fights being ordinary. Once you can accept this, you'll see that fighting feeling ordinary, is quite ordinary.

Ask yourself:

Are you willing to be ordinary, or do you want to fight feeling ordinary - like everyone else?

Tao Te Ching Verse #20

#20 FAITH

For those who have faith, the magic of that faith illuminates their lives.

The Tao says:

The way is elusive and intangible.

The way is dark and unfathomable.

The way has been since before time and space.

The sage is good to people who are deserving.

She is also good to people who are not.

She has faith in people who have faith.

She also has faith in people who have no faith.

Consider:

You do not have to see something, or understand it for it to exist.

Like gravity, love and joy, the Tao is built on faith. No one grasps them, but their reflections are everywhere.

To one who believes in magic, proof is meaningless.

Faith is not believing that something will happen. Faith is believing that you can be happy whether it happens, or not.

Ask yourself:

Do you want faith, or do you demand that things happen as you wish so you don't need faith?

Tao Te Ching Verses #21 #49

#21 YIELDING

To overcome, first yield. To achieve one polarity, embrace its compliment.

The Tao says:

Yield and conquer.

Bend and become straight.

Empty and become full.

Die and be reborn.

Those who desire to triumph must yield.

And those who triumph do so because they yield.

Give up everything and all will be given to you.

When two great forces compete,

the victory belongs to the one who knows when to yield.

Consider:

Fight one polarity and you have committed to a lifetime of battle.

Yield to embrace both polarities and you have overcome the war.

The principle behind yielding is the belief that if you give in, you are open to receive.

When you let go you will have.

Ask yourself:

Are you willing to yield, believing that your turn will come?

Tao Te Ching Verses #22 #61 #69

#22 AT ONE

Being fully with what is, being totally at one, you are yourself fulfilled.

The Tao says:

Speak completely and say little.

Heavy rains do not last all day.

When you are at one with the Tao,

you can become the Tao.

Consider:

When you speak, be the sound.

When you are silent, be the silence.

When you are doing, do fully.

Be at one with whatever is happening at the moment.

Once you totally immerse yourself in something, you become a part of it.

Ask yourself:

Are you willing to momentarily let go of everything else to fully become a part of one thing?

Tao Te Ching Verse #23

#23 EFFORTING

Do what you can in each situation, then let the next moment unfold.

The Tao says:

He who stands on tiptoe is unsteady.

He who strides ahead doesn't go far.

He who brags achieves little.

Followers of the Tao let go of these.

The Tao is always at ease.

It does not strive, yet it overcomes.

It does not demand,

yet it is fulfilled.

Consider:

Once you have done the job, let it go. Striving and efforting will avail nothing.

Let your life stand on its own merit.

People will see what they want to see.

You cannot convince them.

It has been said, "The more hurry, the less speed."

It is also true, "The more effort, the less accomplished."

Ask yourself:

Can you clearly visualize yourself accomplishing what you want with ease and a minimum of effort?

Tao Te Ching Verses #24 #73

#24 THE TAO

Everything is part of the plan. Let it unfold in it's perfection.

The Tao says:
*Something formless and perfect,
born before heaven and earth.
It flows through all things.
It follows what is natural.*

The Tao flows everywhere and it alone endures.

*All things arise from the Tao.
They are nourished, comforted and protected.*

*You find what you seek.
You are forgiven for your mistakes.*

Consider:

Everything has its place.
Let your heart not be troubled. You are taken care of.
There is nothing to look for, or to be, or to do, or to protect.

Ask yourself:

Can you just be happy right now?

Tao Te Ching Verses #25 #34 #51 #62

#25 SELF

However far you roam, you are always with yourself.

The Tao says:

Heaviness is the root of the light.

Stillness is the source of movement.

Beauty can be seen without leaving home.

To be restless is to lose one's root.

Without going outside you can see the whole world.

Without looking out the window, you can see eternity.

The farther you look, the less you comprehend.

Consider:

Know the difference between stimulation and enjoyment.

No matter what extraordinary places you visit, you can see them only with your own eyes.

No matter how vast and limitless the opportunity "outside," you will be guided and limited by what is "inside."

Whatever it is you are looking for, you'll only find it inside yourself.

Ask yourself:

Are you cultivating happiness inside yourself or are you in need of someone, or something outside?

Tao Te Ching Verses #26 #47

#26 OPENNESS

The more openhearted you are, the more the divine light of bliss can shine through you.

The Tao says:

A good traveler has no rigid plans.

A good artist lets himself be led.

The sage takes care of all people - rejects no one

Cares for all things - rejects nothing.

Consider:

To be open to all things, is to know eternal happiness.

The less that is excluded, the more life is savored.

Love all things and above all respect all things.

The more you are open to things, the more life will open to you.

The more things you exclude from life, the less life you have.

Ask yourself:

To how much of life are you open?

And to how much do you close the door?

Tao Te Ching Verse #27

#27 GENTLENESS

Gentleness is not a sign of weakness, but of the greatest strength.

The Tao says:

*Know the power of male;
but keep to the gentleness of female.
Know honor;
but keep humility.
Only when the stone is carved, is it useful.*

*The weak can overcome the strong.
The gentle can overcome the hard.
Everyone knows this to be true,
yet few can use it effectively.*

Consider:

It is well to be strong, but the greatest happiness is built on gentleness.

It is well to be wise, but true wisdom comes from not knowing, and being able to discover.

The greatest statues are carved from a single block of stone.

A truly strong man does not have to prove his strength.

The greatest strength is shown in being gentle.

Ask yourself:

Are you strong enough to be gentle, or does your weakness demand you prove your strength?

Tao Te Ching Verses #28 #78

#28 IMPROVEMENT

Rather than trying to improve yourself, how about being all that you are?

The Tao says:

Do you think that you can improve the world?

I do not believe that it is possible.

The universe is a sacred place.

If you try to change it,

your improvements will ruin it.

Consider:

You are perfect just as you are. If you try to improve yourself, you will want to destroy part of yourself, and that's no improvement.

The situation is perfect as it is.

If you try to improve it and change it, you will destroy the lesson it is here to show you.

Love things as they are and allow them to change by themselves.

Sometimes your need to improve something comes from refusing to accept it as it is. Consequently, you want to correct it, not to make it better, but to avoid what you don't want to see.

Ask yourself:

Can you accept things as they are, thereby allowing them to change at their own pace; or must you manipulate change to avoid your own resistance?

Tao Te Ching Verse #29

#29 FORCE

By attempting to force an issue, you may reinforce obstacles.

The Tao says:

To use force in the universe

Will only cause resistance.

Force is followed by loss of strength.

The gentlest thing in the world

overcomes the hardest thing in the world.

Consider:

The best results are achieved by letting them happen naturally.

Forcing brings resistance. Then more and more energy is needed.

Violence begets violence. Force begets counter-force.

If you try to force an issue, or force an answer, all your energy will be used in trying to force.

You will have no energy left to hear the still small voice that is giving you many alternatives and instructions that you need.

Ask yourself:

Are you spending your energy forcing what you think needs to be done? Or are you listening to hear all that can be done?

Tao Te Ching Verses #30 #43

#30 THREAT or COERCION

Use threats only as a last resort. Peace is a form of celebration. Victory is a form of a funeral.

The Tao says:

Weapons are instruments of fear.

Men detest them.

They are not the wise one's choice.

Victory is no cause for rejoicing.

Victory is observed as a funeral.

Consider:

Everyone is frightened by threats, or angered by them.
Yourself included.

You will accomplish nothing by threatening yourself or others.

Once peace is made, treaties can be signed and progress achieved.

Nothing is ever gained by war. Anything done under duress, or out of fear is not done well.

Anything done with encouragement and enjoyment is done well.

Ask yourself:

Is something threatening or coercing you at the moment?

Are you threatening or attempting to coerce yourself into doing or feeling something?

Tao Te Ching Verse #31

#31 KNOWING SELF

The most important connection you will ever make is with yourself.

The Tao says:

Knowing others is understanding.

Knowing self is wisdom.

Mastering others requires force.

Mastering self requires commitment.

He who realizes he has enough is truly rich.

He who embraces death endures.

(The Tao Te Ching says it all.)

Ask yourself:

Are you trying to manipulate a person or situation, or are you willing to investigate your own feelings?

Tao Te Ching Verse #33

#32 AWARENESS

Awareness may sound dull and flavorless. Actually, it is the source of all happiness.

The Tao says:

*Music, or the smell of good food
may cause passers-by to stop.*

*While the description of the Tao seems monotonous and without
substance, when used, it is inexhaustible.*

Consider:

A thousand things can be exciting, energizing, and appear to hold the secret of happiness.

They are often beautiful and seductive. Most times they are merely distractions which become addictive.

Awareness and peace may appear boring and uninteresting. They are the true source of joy and bliss.

Recognize the difference between enjoyment and stimulation. Enjoyment is fulfilling. Stimulation is a distraction from not being fulfilled.

Ask yourself:

Are you willing to let go of the thousands of stimuli, and trust that being silent and aware is exciting enough?

Tao Te Ching Verse #35

#33 NON-ACTION

Non-action does not mean doing nothing, but flowing with what is being done.

The Tao says:
*The Tao thrives in non-action,
yet nothing is left unfinished.
When nothing must be done,
nothing is left undone.*

*The world progresses by letting things follow their course.
It cannot progress by interfering.*

*When evil has no opposition
it will consume itself.
Rushing into action, you build with no foundation.
Grabbing at things, they fly away.*

Consider:

Allowing the universe to flow uninterrupted, is non-action.

Allowing others to flow with their process, without interference, is non-action.

Through non-action everything is done. Nothing is left unaccomplished.

True non-action is doing your best, while letting the universe do it's best.

Ask yourself:

Are you willing to let things happen rather than trying to make them happen?

Tao Te Ching Verses #37 #48 #60 #64

#34 DECEPTION

Things are not always as they seem.

The Tao says:

The bright path seems blurred.

Going forward seems like going backward.

The easy way seems long.

True clarity seems uncertain.

The greatest wisdom seems simplistic.

Consider:

Do not be deceived by appearances.

The greatest failure may be the door to success. The greatest love may initially seem dispassionate.

Things that look difficult are often the only things worth doing. First impressions are often deceiving.

It is always wise to probe beneath the surface, then you are not unduly influenced by what is on the surface.

Ask yourself:

Could you look deeper into this situation?

Are there areas you have not yet investigated?

Are you deceiving yourself because there is something you may not want to see?

Tao Te Ching Verse #41

#35 CONNECTION

Disconnection is an illusion, as all things are one.

The Tao says:

Ordinary men hate to be "orphaned," "abandoned," or face solitude.

But kings and princes accept these titles.

The wise one embraces her aloneness.

She knows she is at one with the whole universe.

Consider:

Loneliness stems from the belief in separation.

When disconnection is abhorred, there is loneliness.

See where you believe you are separate and disconnected.

Then become aware of where you are one. When you truly celebrate the oneness, then the distinctions of connection and disconnection disappear.

Often the best way to connect is to first disconnect.

Usually the inability to connect comes from the refusal to first disconnect.

Ask yourself:

Are you willing to make some disconnection, in order to connect more fully?

Do you trust that disconnection is an illusion; that everything is connected, in one way or the other?

Tao Te Ching Verse #42

#36 CONTENTMENT

Contentment does not come from things, but from how one feels about things.

The Tao says:

*If you seek fulfillment from others,
you are never fulfilled.*

Discover contentment within yourself.

Be joyous with what you have.

When you realize that nothing is lacking, you are never disappointed.

A self-reliant country has few complications.

The people enjoy their labor.

They don't waste time with machines.

They have no armor or weapons.

Their food is ample and wholesome;

their clothing styled for ease.

They leave each other in peace and die contented.

Consider:

Sit back and enjoy what you have.

You are exactly where you need to be, doing precisely what you need to do.

Find contentment where you are. You have arrived, whether you know it or not.

Ask yourself:

Can you find enjoyment and peace with what is?

Once you can all else falls into place.

Tao Te Ching Verses #44 #80

#37 DISSATISFACTION

Things seldom get better as a result of dissatisfaction.

The Tao says:

True perfection seems blemished.

True fullness seems hollow.

True straightness seems askew.

True wisdom seems stupid.

True eloquence seems awkward.

Consider:

You can find imperfections in everything.

Only when you are satisfied with something, are you free to change it with loving care.

If you are dissatisfied with something, you will fight it.

When you are fighting with it, you are not in a place to enhance its beauty.

You are only trying to destroy what you think is ugly.

When you are seeing only ugliness, how can you make it better?

Enjoyment takes practice.

Ask yourself:

Are you looking for things that you can enjoy - or things with which you can find fault?

(If you don't know, look around and what do you see?)

Tao Te Ching Verse #45

#38 DEATH/LIFE

When you have lost your fear of death, you have lost your fear of living.

The Tao says:

He who accepts that he will die can go anywhere without fear.

He will not be hurt, for he has no illusions left to be shattered.

He holds nothing back from life

and life holds nothing back from him.

Consider:

People who truly love life and revel in every moment, realize that whatever comes next can not be very different from "what is." Loving "what is," they have no fear.

To lose your fear of death - love each moment.

If you love something fully and completely, you can more easily let it go.

If something is incomplete, you are less apt to let it go.

If you are afraid of parting with, changing, or ending something, you may be incomplete with it.

Ask yourself:

Are you willing to let something die so something else can be born?

Tao Te Ching Verse #50

#39 MODERATION

If one side of the seesaw descends, the other must rise.

The Tao says:

*When the court is particularly splendid,
farmers struggle to endure.
When men indulge themselves,
they become robbers.*

*Being free from his own whims,
a moderate man is supple and caring.*

*The more taxes are raised,
the more hunger abounds.
The more leaders interfere,
the more rebellion emerges.*

Consider:

Exaggerating one side diminishes the other.

When you are overindulging one part, you are depriving the other.

Having too much of anything spoils it because there is then too little of something else.

Ask yourself:

Can you see where your pursuit of overabundance of something has created lack of something else in your life?

Are you willing to be more moderate?

Tao Te Ching Verses #53 #59 #75

#40 COMMITMENT

Commit to celebrating, and your life can be nothing but a celebration.

The Tao says:

Whatever is assimilated can not be dislodged.

Whatever is loved can not disappear.

Cultivate love and it will abound.

Cultivate it in the family and the family will flourish.

Cultivate it in your life and your life will be real.

Consider:

What you see out there is not some random happening - it is the mirror - the reflection of your very own commitment.

If you want peace, commit to celebrating peace and you will be at peace.

If you want to fight war, commit to fighting war and listen to the noise of the battle raging around you.

The only true purpose, or meaning of life is the one to which you are committed at the moment.

Ask yourself:

"What is my real commitment?"

That, and only that, is what you will see. That is what your life is about right now.

Tao Te Ching Verse #54

#41 BE AS A CHILD

True maturity includes the willingness to be as a child.

The Tao says:

*Live in harmony with the Tao
and be like a newborn child.*

A newborn's bones are soft, not brittle;

her muscles are weak,

but her grip is strong.

She can scream all day without becoming hoarse.

She is living in harmony with her vital energies.

*The Sage unites the experiences of the adult and the willingness of
the newborn.*

Her spirit lives in perfect harmony and never grows old.

Consider:

You can regain your innocence merely by wanting to know.

You can regain your youth by enjoying simple things.

You can regain your awe by looking for the wonder in all
things.

Be willing to be child like, not childish.

Being full of wonder makes everything wonderful.

Ask yourself:

What would your life be like if you were to look at
everything as though you were seeing it for the first time?

Tao Te Ching Verse #55

#42 SIMPLICITY

To simplify what is difficult, is to make it easy.

The Tao says:

Simplify the complicated.

Embrace what could be difficult while it is still easy.

Take each small step and the great journey will be completed.

The Sage melts into difficulties and therefore experiences them without difficulty.

(Nothing more need be said.)

Ask yourself:

What complication could you simplify by taking each small step, one at a time?

Tao Te Ching Verse #63

#43 NOT KNOWING

The greatest and most meaningful discoveries are made with the beginner's mind.

The Tao says:

Ancient sages did not try to enlighten others.

They taught people to not-know.

When people think they know the answer

they are difficult to guide.

When people accept that they don't know,

they can find their own answers.

Consider:

The less you believe you know, or understand, the more you ask and the more you listen.

The more you listen, the more you learn. The more you learn, the more you realize how little you know.

No matter how much you know about anything, there is always something else to learn. That something else, may be just what you need.

Sometimes the person who knows nothing about the problem is the first to solve it. This is because he is not limited by what can not be done.

Ask yourself:

If you knew nothing about this situation, no "do"s, no "don't"s, no "what if"s, no "if only"s, how would you approach it? What would you do?

Tao Te Ching Verse #65

#44 INVALIDATION

To allow others to see you as less than you are, is to become more and more of what you truly are.

The Tao says:

The sage guides people by being below them.

The sage leads people by following them.

She is never above the people

so they never feel oppressed.

Since she never competes,

she experiences no competition.

Consider:

Let others see you with their limited vision. Might as well! They are going to do it anyway.

Always remember that other people's perception of you is based solely on what they need to see at the moment. It has nothing to do with you. You are only the object of their fight, or their celebration.

Ask yourself:

Can you imagine how free you would feel if you would let people see you through their own myopia? Could you even let them see you as somebody you would never want to be?

Tao Te Ching Verse #66

#45 PARTNERS

It is always wise to allow your partner to do what he or she does best.

The Tao says:

A skillful fighter is not warlike.

A skillful competitor is not aggressive.

A skillful employer is not above others.

This is the Tao of not striving.

This is the ability to use other's abilities with harmony.

Consider:

Deal from your partner's strength, not weakness.

To encourage, or support a partner, let your partner shine in his or her field of enjoyment and expertise.

If you do not yet see his or her field of expertise, you might ask yourself, "Why did I lead myself to this partner?"

A partner is more productive when appreciated, as well as the other way around.

Ask yourself:

How could you help your partner to be more content, more inspired, or more appreciated?

How could you help this partnership to be more inspired?

Tao Te Ching Verse #68

#46 HAPPINESS

Everyone claims that they want to be happy, and almost no one behaves as though that were so.

The Tao says:

My teachings are easy to understand and easy to perform.

Yet few know how to practice them.

Making fun of them is too easy and popular.

Consider:

If happiness is what you truly want, take it. It's yours.

Sometimes what you truly want is to fight, avoid, or destroy something you don't want.

Trying to fight, or overcome what you think is keeping you from being happy, is what is really keeping you from being happy.

Ask yourself:

Is there anything keeping you from being sublimely happy at this moment?

Is fighting something more important than that happiness?

Tao Te Ching Verse #70

#47 ARROGANCE

Refusing to admit ignorance is not only ignorant, it is arrogant.

The Tao says:

Accepting your ignorance is strength.

Ignoring your ignorance is weakness.

Presuming to be knowledgeable is sickness.

Not-knowing is the path of wholeness.

*When people replace their sense of awe
with certainty, there is conflict.*

*The sage has self respect,
therefore she is not arrogant.*

Consider:

Pretending to be what you are not, keeps people from seeing who you are. Who knows - what you are might be just what they are looking for.

You don't always have to know. Sometimes life is more fun, and you are more appealing when you don't. Pretending to know when you don't know, will prevent you from ever finding out.

Ask yourself:

What would happen if you didn't know, or didn't even find out the answer, but just went along for the joy of the ride?

Tao Te Ching Verses #71 #72

#48 CONTROL

He who is willing to let go of control, is the one truly in control.

The Tao says:

More restrictions yield less cooperation.

More weapons yield less friends.

More subsidies yield less confidence

Believing you are in control is like believing you are a master carpenter.

When you use his tools you will surely cut your own hand.

Consider:

Trying to whip things into shape, you may end up flogging yourself.

Once you are willing to let go of control, you become aware of the over-all picture. Then, you can see what needs your involvement, and more important, what doesn't.

Trust and control are mutually exclusive. Where there is no trust, control is needed. Where trust is present, control is unnecessary.

Ask yourself:

Are you willing to give up control?

Tao Te Ching Verses #57 #74

#49 RIGIDITY

Suppleness is a sign of youth. Rigidity is a sign of old age.

The Tao says:

Man enters life soft and limber.

Man leaves life hard and taut.

Plants begin tender and flexible.

They end withered and dry.

The rigid and inflexible is a student of death.

The soft and yielding is a devotee of life.

The unbending will be broken.

The supple will abound.

(Enough said.)

Ask yourself:

Are you willing to be flexible?

Tao Te Ching Verse #76

#50 BLAME

The need to blame another, comes from the inability to accept responsibility for oneself.

The Tao says:

Blaming another blinds you to your own lesson.

*The wise one examines her own accountability,
and learns from her own errors.*

She exacts nothing of others.

Consider:

Blaming someone else for the way you feel, is like blaming a mirror because you don't like what you see reflected.

Only when you cease blaming anyone or anything, are you free to truly see and learn from a situation. Then you are free to move on to a new one.

When you are in the flow of life there is no fault, no blame.

Blame is our desperate attempt to keep from accepting responsibility for our own discomfort.

"Guilt" is simply a form of blame. When we can not face the responsibility, or find someone to blame, we blame ourselves.

Ask yourself:

Are you willing to accept that you have lead yourself to this very situation for one of two reasons - to celebrate, or to fight?

Which would you prefer?

Tao Te Ching Verse # 79

#51 NONSENSE

Either your question has already been answered, or the question is one that can not be answered by this method, or you already know the answer and any further inquiries are not fruitful.

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2 Polarity	2 & 36 & 43
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