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PARABLES AND STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

WRITTEN BY
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This pack brings to life parables and stories from around the world. These include parables from Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism and Sikhism, as well as stories from secular sources. The benefit of using parables with students is that by the use of otherwise improbable stories it is possible to express quite complicated ideas in a simple and entertaining way.

Parables have been used by teachers for thousands of years. This selection is written in simple English avoiding the traditional "Thee and Thou" terminology which often confuses or discourages the modern student. The stories have been expressed in a way that do not direct the reader to any specific religion and without showing preferences for any particular school of thought or belief.

This pack compliments the **STORIES FROM THE BIBLE** pack. For this reason Christian parables and stories are not included here.

TWO FROGS IN A WELL

1

One day the frog that lived in the ocean came to visit his cousin, who lived in a well. The well frog had always lived in the deep well and was too small to leap out of it, into the outside world. The ocean frog had seen much of the world and was very learned.

The well frog was very happy to see his cousin and they talked about all sorts of things.

"How big is your home?" Asked the well frog.

"It's very big," answered the ocean frog.

The ocean frog thought that unless someone had actually seen the ocean, it would be very difficult to explain its size, and in any case the well frog's experience was so limited that it would be impossible to explain anything of any size to him.

"Is it this big?" The well frog asked as he jumped up into the air about a third of the way up his well.

"Bigger than that," said the ocean frog.

"This big?" The well frog jumped up halfway the height of the well.

"Bigger."

The well frog leapt as high as he had ever leapt and almost reached the full height of the well. "This big?"

"Bigger."

The well frog became furious with indignation. "That's not possible. This well is the biggest thing I've ever seen, there can't be anything bigger. You are lying." To the well frog even the sky was only the circle he could see when he looked up. Everything in his understanding was limited by the walls of the well and the circle of sky above.

The ocean frog could not convince the well frog.

We all make decisions based on our own experience and often deny that anything that we cannot understand exists. Have you ever reacted to a piece of information as "**Impossible?**".

Many people are not religious because they cannot understand the ideas which other people seem to accept without any difficulty. Should we only believe the things which we have personal experience of? How would we learn about things if we did not put a certain amount of "faith" in what other people tell us?

TWO FROGS IN A BUCKET

2

One day two frogs fell into a bucket of milk. The bucket was made of metal and had very slippery sides. The frogs were in danger of drowning unless they kept paddling around in the milk. If they stopped they would sink.

The larger frog swam quite well at first but soon got tired. After a while he said; "I cant go on any longer."

The other frog said; "we must both keep on paddling around or we will die. Keep going and we might be saved."

They both continued paddling round and round in the bucket but there seemed little hope to the larger frog that they would be saved. After a while longer the larger frog said that he couldn't go on. He stopped paddling and sank to the bottom of the bucket and died.

The other frog was now on his own and it seemed even harder to keep on paddling. He kept on and on until he was completely out of energy.

"I am going to die like my friend." He thought.

Finally after the last possible stroke he could muster he gave up the struggle. As he began to sink, he felt something hard under his feet. The frog had paddled so much that the milk had turned into butter. Using the hard surface of the butter, the frog mustered the last of his strength and jumped out of the bucket.



This parable tells us that you should never give up hope. Even in the worst situations there may be a force at work which we do not know about which might help us. Many religions ask believers to accept that God is working for them and they should have hope because often things turn out quite differently than we expected.

How realistic is this attitude of having faith? Doesn't faith often lead to people continuing to live in bad conditions whilst they wait for something to 'happen'?

FISH IN A BUCKET

3

There were two fishes who lived in a small pond. The smaller fish was open minded and adventurous, whilst the larger fish was cautious.

"I want to swim in the large ocean and see the world." The small fish was always eager to do new things.

The big fish warned the smaller one. "In the ocean there are bigger fish which aren't as nice as me. They will swallow you up in one gulp, and that will be that. You wont see much of the world sitting in a shark's stomach will you?"

"The ocean has its dangers, but if you don't take a few risks you might not see anything or do anything. Anyway, a big bird might come out of the sky one day and pluck you out of this pond and eat you. You never know about what's coming next so you shouldn't worry."

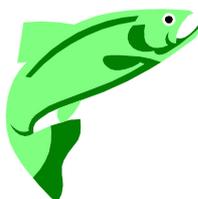
The big fish became very worried at the thought of being devoured. Was nowhere safe?

One day the small fish got its chance and got to the ocean. It disappeared into the vastness of the ocean and was never seen again.

The larger fish saw a bucket full of water sitting under a bush where no predator from the air would see it. The large fish jumped into the bucket and was safe.

On days when the large fish got fed up with not being able to swim, or even turn round comfortably in its bucket it often thought about the little fish and it's favourite saying:

"Better freedom with danger than peace with slavery."



Is it just as bad to be over confident as over cautious?

Which type are you, an adventurer or a more cautious person?

Buddhists often use similar examples like the story above to teach that both positions are wrong. The way to be is in the middle, not totally without care, and not so cautious that life is hardly worth living. Find out about what Buddhists mean by **The Middle Way**.

A PIN IN HEAVEN

4

One day Guru Nanak was supposed to have dinner at a rich man's home. As he was walking he saw a very poor man who lived in a very small tumble down house at the side of the road. The Guru sat down to eat dinner at this man's house. The man didn't have much but he was prepared to share it.

Meanwhile the rich man had a great feast prepared, served on silver platters, which the Guru didn't go to eat. The rich man was very upset.

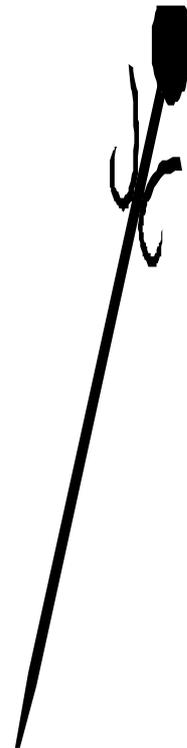
The next day the Guru met the rich man. The rich man became very happy when the Guru asked him to do a favour for him and forgot his previous disappointment. He thought that it was a great honour to be asked a favour by someone as great as Guru Nanak.

"Will you take this pin from me and return it to me when we meet in heaven?" The Guru asked the rich man.

The rich man laughed and replied, "That is impossible. No-one can take anything with them when they die, not even you!"

"Then why do you spend all your time making money and building an empire, if you are going to have to leave it all behind when you die?" The Guru asked.

The man realised that he had spent much of his life, sometimes lying and cheating, to build up his wealth and businesses. He also realised why the Guru had preferred to eat with the poor man. The poor man didn't have much but he shared it and he had gained what he did have by fair means. Whilst the rich man was blinded by greed and the glitter of wealth, the poor man was religious and honest.



All religions advise people to stop wasting time gathering material things around them and spend more time through prayer or study to prepare for the next life.

How realistic is it to expect people to give up material desires today in order to be better prepared for their next life?

The holy man explained to the young student that when praying you shouldn't behave like a beggar;

"Don't beg for a new car, a new job, a house, gold...just say to God 'I am your child'."

The holy man told the student a story. A beggar went up to a huge house and knocked at the door. He begged for a little food, and was given what he had asked for. The daughter of the house could ask her father for almost anything, and as long as it was good for her, her father would give it to her.

"In the same way," the holy man continued, "if you beg to God for something, he will probably give it to you. But if you don't beg, and behave as if you were the child of God, then God would give you much more."

"Many people ask for material things, but when they have all of these things they are still not happy. Is it not better to have a little but be happy, than to have all the material things in the world but be unhappy? If you are the child of God then you can attain a happiness which is greater than the happiness you get from things. How many times have you really wanted to possess something and then forgotten about it just a few days after getting it?"



Do you ever pray to God? If you do, are you praying for things, (being a beggar), or do you just pray without asking for anything?

Does God listen to prayers?

If you don't ask then how can you get something?

TIME IS NOT SHORT

6

The disciple said that he only had a few hours to devote to God, so could the Guru please hurry up and tell him about God so that he could get on and do other things.

The Guru said; "Time is not short. You have millions of lives to achieve the things you have decided to do. If you do not manage to do them in this life, you have many more to come."

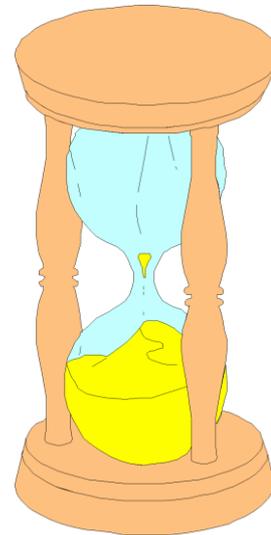
The disciple thought that the Guru was going mad. "I don't want to wait for the next life, I have things to do now. I have to work hard and buy a house, and all the things that other people have. I want to be someone now. There might not be another life in any case."

The Guru smiled knowingly and said; "Even if there were no other life after this one, even then time is not short. Remember that you cannot take anything with you. Do only those things which make you happy and don't waste time gathering things which everyone else has but are of no use to you."

"What do you mean?" asked the disciple.

"You have only one pair of eyes, so buy only one television set. You only have three people in your house so don't try to obtain an eight bedroom house. You are just one person out of a world of 6 Billion people. So don't try to be someone, just be yourself."

The disciple suddenly realised he had much more time than he thought.



Is everyone rushing around trying to do things which when they look back at them, realise are of little use to them?

Some people say that the biggest problem with living today is that we are all slaves to time. Time rules our every move... time to go to bed, time to wake up, time to go to school etc.

Is the Guru in the story correct when he says that whether you believe in life after death or not it is important to only do those things in life which are of **real** benefit to us?

People complained that the old woman gossiped too much. They went to the Rabbi and complained that her gossiping hurt them. The Rabbi said; "Gossip hurts three ways; it hurts the person who gossips because no-one likes them, it hurts the person who is being gossiped about, and it hurts those who listen because they are implicated in it. I will have a word with her."

The Rabbi called the woman to visit his house. She claimed that she only told perhaps one person or two, and she didn't know how the gossip could spread because of her.

The Rabbi gave her a pillow and a knife. "Rip the pillow and empty the feathers out of the window."

The woman ripped the pillow with the knife and scattered the feathers out of the window.

"Come back and see me in one week." The Rabbi advised her.

After a week the woman returned to the Rabbi's house. He asked her to go outside and collect all the feathers.

"I can't!" she exclaimed. "They will have spread all over the countryside by now."

The Rabbi told her that her words to just one or two people spread around the countryside in the same way as the feathers spread from just one pillow.



Is gossiping really as bad as the story suggests? Isn't gossiping an important way of finding out about things?

What is the difference between gossip and discussion?

Is there such a thing as harmless gossip?

"I know everything. I don't need anyone to tell me anything at all. Keep your thoughts to yourself." The student was determined that he needed no further instruction from anyone. The teacher felt a bit unhappy but decided that if that was what his student wanted, it was his loss.

Then he remembered a saying:

**In the land of the blind
the one eyed man is King.**

"What do you mean?" asked another student.

"Well," began the teacher, "if everyone knows only a little, then the person who know a bit more is seen to be clever. In the world where everyone knows a lot of things then the one who knows less is not going to rule the day.

"This student knows only a little but compared to his firends he knows a lot. So he thinks he is King. One day, everyone else will know as much as him, and then he will not think he is so clever."

Over time the other students continued to learn new things and the day came when they passed their examinations.

The teacher asked his awkward student; "Do you still know everything?"

The student could not answer.

Sometimes it seem that everyone thinks that they know everything. Try asking several people you know to comment on a topic which they know little or nothing about. See how keen some people are to give an opinion.

Is there a time when we can say that we know enough and do not need to know any more, or is life an education every day?

Houn was a Chinaman who had left the small town he had been born in at a very young age. Now he was old and getting frail. He wanted to travel back to his home town before he died. But his memory was very poor so he took some friends with him.

When they got near the town where he had been born, the friends decided to play a trick on the old man. "Houn, there is the town in which you were born." They pointed out a different town far down in the valley. Houn rushed along to get there and already felt familiar with the place.

When they got to the town one of the friends pointed to a burial ground and said; "Houn, this is the place where all your ancestors are buried." Houn walked over and felt the spirits of his ancestors in the air.

"Houn, over there, that is your father's grave." The friends pointed to one of the mounds. Houn felt sorrow and sat and cried at the grave side for many minutes.

Suddenly all his friends started laughing out loud.

"Why are you laughing, can't you see how distressed I am?" Houn protested.

The friends told him that they had played a trick on him, and that his home town was still some way off.

Houn quickly dried his tears and composed himself. "Why did you play a trick on me?"

The friends told him that even though he was an old man, he still lacked wisdom. "You should try to feel the same joy and sorrow for all regardless of whether they are your relatives or someone else's. It does not matter whether this is your father's or someone else's father grave, does it? The wise person cares for everyone."

Houn understood that it was foolish to cry for relatives he had hardly known or to seek out his own relatives in particular, because everyone is the same, coming from the same source and going from this world the same way.

Every day we hear on the news about some tragedy which has happened. If we hear that three people were killed in a car crash would we react in the same way as if three of our closest relatives had been killed?

Is it important to treat everyone the same or is it acceptable that we should be more concerned about our own nearest family and friends?

THE WISE BIRD

10

One day a Rabbi was walking along the street when he saw someone walking towards him with a beautiful bird in a cage. The Rabbi was so spellbound by the beauty of the bird that he offered to buy it from its owner. Later, as he walked down the street with the bird, it started talking to him.

"Please let me go. I am a wise bird. If you let me go I will tell you some wise words."

The Rabbi said that he would let the bird go after he had heard the wise words and only if he thought the wisdom deserved it. The bird agreed and told him three things.

"Never believe the absurd, always know your limits, and never regret having done a good deed."

When the Rabbi freed the bird, he was walking down the road thinking that he could use these words in a sermon when the bird sat on a nearby branch and started laughing at him.

"You fool. I have a diamond in my stomach. You could have cut me open and become the richest man around."

The Rabbi became angry and chased the bird. Every time he climbed higher into the tree the bird would hop even higher up. Eventually the Rabbi slipped and fell to the ground.

The bird sat near him and said; "You have learned nothing. I said don't believe the absurd but you did believe that a bird can have a diamond in its stomach. I said know your limits but you kept climbing until you fell, and I said never regret a good deed but you regretted letting me go."

The Rabbi said; "I understand now. Before they were only words, but now I understand what they mean. Thank you for giving me such wisdom."

This story tells us the difference between knowledge and understanding. We all know things but do not always understand them. Understanding is gained through action whilst knowledge is learned passively.

Think of an occasion when you have experienced some event which has led to you understanding things in a different way.

"Everything in the world is an illusion." Everyone thought the wise man had finally lost his senses. They all shouted, "Rubbish" and began to turn and go.

"I will prove it," said the wise man. "Look at the dog down the street, there," he said pointing to a large dog. "To one person that dog looks like a big cuddly pet that he or she would love to own. But to some other person it looks like a big dangerous beast that might bite at any moment. But the dog is just a dog. It is neither the cuddly pet or the dangerous beast. It is just a dog. It is just that depending on what your experience of dogs is determines how you see the dog."

People were impressed with the wise man.

He went on; "Some people like garlic and other hate it. But garlic is just garlic. It isn't bad or good. People make things look bad or good by their opinions. That is why I said that the world is an illusion. We only see what we want to see, but do not see what is really there.

"And right and wrong is the same. It is wrong to murder someone. I think we all agree on that. But in wartime we give medals to those who kill the most! So now, you tell me what is the ultimate reality of anything, even a pea or a grain of rice. Don't some people love peas whilst others hate them and the same goes for a grain of rice. From the smallest to the largest, what is real?"



This story is about perceptions. If you stand in a circle and look at an object placed in the middle, you will all see the same object but you will see it from different angles.

Religious ideas are more acceptable to some people because they look at them from a different perspective than other people.

Taking a piece of paper, each person in the group should draw a picture of what they understand a house to be. Compare the different perceptions which members of the group

Mulla Nasruddin was digging a large hole in his garden. His wife asked him; "What are you doing Mulla?"

He ignored her and continued to dig. He was very involved in the digging. Eventually when he had dug the hole very deep he stopped for breath. Again his wife asked him what he was doing. He replied; "You see all that earth at that end of the garden. I am going to get rid of it by putting it all in this hole."

"And what will you do with the earth which you have dug out to make space for the earth at the end of the garden?"

Mulla looked at the pile of earth he had just dug out; "I will come to that later."

Then after a while he said; "I could always dig this hole deeper so that it will take that soil as well."

His wife gravely shook her head and telephoned for the doctor.

The Guru said to his disciple; "Remember, you cannot dig another hole by digging the same hole deeper."

"What do you mean?" asked the disciple.

"Sometimes you need to think about a new way of doing things rather than doing the same things more determinedly. If you are digging for treasure and you dig in the wrong place, you can dig for as long as you like but you will still not find anything."

Sometimes people try to find answers to their problems but look in the wrong place.

How can you be sure that you are looking in the right place when you try to solve a problem?

The Guru was sitting in front of the congregation. People were coming and offering gifts and money. The rich people who were most afraid of death because they thought they had more to lose gave extravagantly. The Guru was not moved either to criticise or congratulate. All offerings were welcome.

One very poor man who had very little money had worked even harder than usual to make an extra silver coin which he could donate. When he saw the extravagance of the other people he felt ashamed that he only had one silver piece. He sat at the back of the congregation.

The Guru waited.

The rich people who had made their offerings were getting impatient because they wanted the Guru to start his sermon. They had other things on their minds, like getting back to their businesses. Indeed some of them had only come because they didn't want other people to get one step ahead of them, and to compete to give the biggest donation.

The Guru waited. Some people began asking why he would not start his sermon. He said; "There is still one donation, the biggest of all, still to come." No-one understood, including the poor man.

Eventually the Guru himself got up and went to the poor man. "I am waiting for your donation," he said.

The poor man was overwhelmed. The Guru explained; "It doesn't matter how much a rich person gives because it is not the amount that matters. What matters is the way it is given. This man has saved up his donation by very hard work and he has a very honest dedication to God. His silver coin is worth more than all the other donations given today."



Religious actions are measured solely by intent. The amount of something does not apply because religion is about spirit and not things.

Do you know of examples where people think they are being religious or doing good by offering things but do not really believe in God in their hearts?

A DONKEY'S LOAD

14

A farmer had loaded his donkey up with a big bag of wheat, and to balance the bag out, he put another big bag, of sand, on the other side. As he was walking along the dusty road he met another man coming the other way. The other man asked him why he had put a bag of sand on one side.

"To balance out the weight of the wheat on the other side." He replied.

"Why don't you simply put half the wheat on one side and half on the other. Then you will not need the sand and the donkey will have less to carry."

The farmer thought this was a very good idea. He piled up the sand from his bag on the ground, and shared the weight of the wheat on both sides. The farmer started thinking how clever this stranger was.

After a while the farmer could not help asking; "You are very clever, but why are you dressed so shabbily. You must be a very rich man with wisdom like this. Perhaps you are on your way to do a dirty job or are returning from it?"

"No," replied the man, "these are the only clothes I have."

The farmer turned around and headed back the way he had come.

"Where are you going?" asked the stranger.

"I am going to re-load my sand."

"Why?"

"Because you are obviously not very clever. If you were clever you would be rich and would be able to afford to get dressed up and be cleaner."

The farmer thought that wisdom came from wealth.

What is wisdom?

How does a person gain wisdom? Has it got anything to do with education, age or wealth?

Are rich people rich because they are cleverer than others?



The River God called up into the mountains for the little droplets of water to come down to him. He called them to form little rivulets and then join together to form streams. He called them to rush down the hillside and join again into rivers. He told the rivers to then join up and become one big thundering river.

When the drops and rivulets and streams and rivers had all joined up they made a huge frightening river of such force that it swept away villages, and cattle and all the people in its path.

"Ha!" The River God was so powerful he felt that there was no-one and nothing bigger or better than he was. "I am the most powerful, the most feared force on Earth."

Eventually the river spread out into the valley floor and became slower and very wide. The River God spread out like a God should, and coasted down the slow currents majestically, posing for the rest of the pitiful world to see.

The river wound around in a huge arc and when the River God next looked into the distance, his face dropped. In front of him was standing the Ocean with its arms wide open, stretching into infinity. The River God was suddenly very small, the proverbial drop in the ocean.

Irresistibly the Ocean drew the river into its mass and the river disappeared into the vastness of the Ocean. At first the River God was devastated by the experience, but then he was overcome with joy as he realised that he was now part of something even bigger.

This story is about people who think they are very important. In a small bucket, a fish might think it is everything, but in the ocean it becomes very insignificant.

Why do some people think they are more important than other people?

Is anyone really more important than someone else or is it just their mind which makes them think they are? What factors determine whether someone is important or not?

"Constant dripping hollows out a stone."

This simple line teaches that if a person tries and tries to do something, the constant trying will eventually have some effect, and possibly it will lead to the desired result.

Even as the drip, dripping of water onto a very hard stone eventually hollows out the stone, so a person can dedicate him or herself to achieve something and by trying and trying can achieve it.

There is a great history of similar quotes in the West, including:

"If at first you don't succeed try, try again."

"Never say die."

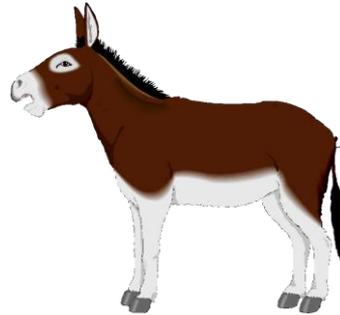
The alternative of course is:

"If at first you don't succeed,
try something else instead."

Determination is very important if you want to achieve things in life. Why are some people more determined to succeed than others?

Should people be determined in life or should we just accept what comes along?

Often we have little control in our lives, but we sometimes think that we are in control. Is this true?



A man and his son were going to market to sell their donkey. As they led it along the road a man coming the other way commented; "You're foolish. Why make the young lad walk when he could ride on the donkey?"

The father thought this was a good idea so he seated his son on the donkey. As they went further on, another person commented; "Thought- less young lad, making his father walk whilst he rides."

The Father heard this and sat on the donkey, whilst the son walked by his side. Another person passing by said; "Why make the young lad walk? You could both ride on the donkey."

The father thought that there was a lot of good wisdom about that day, and he sat his son on the donkey with him. A passing stranger was very angry; "You fools, making a poor little donkey carry two people. You should be ashamed of yourselves. You should be carrying the donkey."

The father felt sorry for the donkey. So he and his son got off the donkey and taking one end each, they lifted the donkey up and carried it the rest of the way to the town.

When they got to the town everyone started laughing at the two fools carrying a donkey. The father and son did not understand what all the fuss was about.

Is it true that some people listen to the advice of others too much?

How much should we listen to others when we decide what to do?

How do we know we are listening to the right people when we do take advice?

Shouldn't people keep their advice to themselves and let the rest of us get on with our lives?

A woman with only five chickens one day looked into the coop and found five big fresh eggs. She thought to herself; "If I hatch out five chickens, I will have ten chickens altogether."

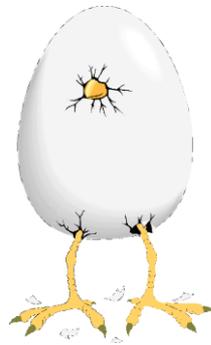
She looked after the eggs and continued to plan. "They will lay more eggs, and then more and more, and soon I will have more chickens than I need. I will sell them to other people."

She felt very good indeed as she continued to plan. "I will buy a cow with the money I get from selling the chickens, and then I will have lots of milk to drink. But living on my own, I don't need much milk so I will be able to sell it to others."

The woman was getting quite excited about the prospect of having more chickens than she knew what to do with, and having cows and selling milk. "After selling the milk I will have enough money to buy new clothes and even start thinking about a new house."

By the evening, she had planned out all of her future and found that she would be very well off indeed. No need to worry about anything ever again.

She stood up and went over to look at her five eggs which were to start her off on this great venture. Slipping on the wet floor she stumbled and all the eggs broke.



How much should we plan?

If we didn't make a plan of things we wanted to do wouldn't we make mistakes?

Some religious teachers say that we spend so much time making plans that we don't have time to live our lives now. Thinking about the past and planning the future we forget to notice the present moment. Is this true?

A disciple who was very dedicated to finding God decided to give up all worldly possessions and spend all his time meditating under a tree, like The Buddha had done thousands of years ago.

He wore only a pair of shorts and went and sat under a tree. He felt very good that he had no other possessions in the world.

That night whilst he was sleeping, a mouse came up and nibbled at his shorts. In the morning the man was very upset and looking up to the sky said; "I have given up everything for you except my shorts and even then you send a mouse to nibble at them."

A passing man, after hearing the story, advised that he get a cat to keep away the mouse. The man even gave him a cat because he had one too many.

The mouse never came again, but every day the disciple had to walk to the village to beg for milk for the cat.

The man who had given him the cat advised him to get a cow so that he wouldn't have to beg for milk every day. The man even had a cow he didn't want which he gladly gave to the disciple.

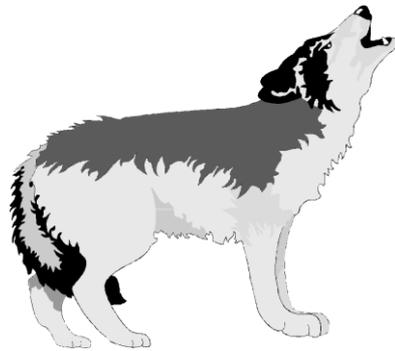
The disciple was very happy with this arrangement. One day, however, all the local farmers came to him and said; "We don't mind it too much, but you know your cow is eating our crops. Why don't you grow your own crops to feed it?" They all paid a little bit each and bought him his own field.

The disciple was too busy with God to grow anything himself so he used to get the local children to do the work. The villagers came again and said; "Our children don't mind helping you but they are missing school. Why don't you get married and have your own children, then they can help you?"

The disciple was getting ready to marry one of the village girls when a holy man came to see him and said; "So you gave up everything to find God? You don't seem to be doing too well." The disciple realised he had been foolish.

This story tells us that we cannot find God 'somewhere else'. We should live our lives and work as well as believe. It is impossible to drop everything.

Some religious teachers tell us that God is in the work we do, and that we should just be honest and hard-working if we want God to help us. Do you agree?



An old man and a young man were crossing a river in a boat. As they came to the shore the old man asked the boat man; "We want to get to the nearby town this evening. I know they shut the gates at night to keep the wild animals and thieves out. Can we get to the town in time before the gates are shut?"

The boat man answered; "Yes. You can get there if you walk slowly."

The young man who thought he was very clever exclaimed; "What on earth do you mean. Everyone knows that if you go slowly it takes longer to get somewhere."

The young man leapt out of the boat and began jogging along the path towards the town. The old man walked slowly, taking the boat man's advice.

Soon the young man twisted his ankle and fell over. When the old man caught up with him he said; "Now how will you get to the town before they shut the gates for the night?"

The young man understood then what the boat man had said. He realised that sometimes it was necessary to plan before acting and to be aware of the situation.

The old man reached the town just as the gates were being closed.

The young man was eaten by wolves in the night.

Was the young man foolish or just unlucky?

Can you think of an occasion when you have done something wrong because you didn't think about it properly first?

Do we always need to plan before we do anything?

1	ZEN BUDDHIST	11	BUDDHISM
2	HINDU	12	ISLAM
3	SECULAR	13	SIKHISM
4	SIKHISM	14	BUDDHISM
5	HINDU	15	ZEN BUDDHIST
6	ZEN BUDDHIST	16	ANONYMOUS
7	JUDAISM	17	HINDU
8	ANONYMOUS	18	ANONYMOUS
9	BUDDHISM	19	HINDU
10	JUDAISM	20	ZEN BUDDHIST

NB It is very difficult to assign dates or details for most of these stories because they appear in many versions and at different times in the history of the religion. Also, they often appear in different contexts.

The aim of these stories is not their historical significance but the meanings hidden behind the stories and parables which give an insight into the religions and thinking of their followers.