

About Vernon Howard



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TREASURY OF POSITIVE ANSWERS

This book is part of The SuperWisdom Course

Chapter 4: How to Win Higher Guidance

Q: How can we recognize and remain on the right path?

A: Imagine yourself hiking a forest trail with the aim of reaching the peak of a distant mountain. Coming to many forks along the trail, you don't know which way to turn. This is not a severe problem as long as you maintain your wish for the mountain. See why? Your clear goal enables you to recognize the wrong path, for you see how it takes you away from the mountain, not toward it. Loyalty to your lofty aim is your corrective guide.

Q: Too often we do not know where to look for answers.

A: To understand where you must not look for answers is superb progress in itself. This means you must attain healthy disillusionment. Start by being disillusioned with glittering but empty social schemes for human betterment.

Q: How can we experience higher power?

A: You are not condemned for anything but you are also not excused from anything. See these two ideas together at the same time and a powerful third force for self-awakening is created.

Q: Why do we fail to understand answers to our question?

A: The true answer to a question resides on a higher level than the question. Therefore a sincere person asking a question should not expect the answer to be immediately clear to him. He should not be discouraged by his lack of comprehension, but should patiently lift his consciousness up to the level of the answer. When an insincere person hears a true answer he gains nothing, for he instantly and fearfully distorts it to fit his own egotistical illusions.

Q: We need help from those who really know the answers, but must retain mental independence. Please comment.

A: At the start we need others to remind us of what we must do, but eventually we remind ourselves, like having an internal guidebook which can be read instantly by our spiritual eyes.

Q: How can we contact right guidance?

A: Truth invites. Its invitation is always open. Anyone can accept the invitation any time. But understand something quite clearly. Truth invites—and then stops. It stops because it knows the individual must make the next move. Truth never pleads or compromises or wavers. It invites and awaits your acceptance.

Q: I feel like someone trapped in a big and brawling city. I feel helpless, ignorant of what to do.

A: You may not realize it as yet but you can always go home. You can always do that. Then you will know what to do, just as you know how to

handle the stove and refrigerator in your physical house. You cannot know what to do while remaining in the noisy city, for you are still part of its confusion.

Q: By going home I think you mean we must return to our real nature.

A: That is one way to say it. But let's emphasize a particular point. In order to reach home where you have the guidance of cosmic insight you must first depart from your present location. You cannot remain in the noisy city of your own vanities and expect to know what to do. Cosmic knowledge and personal vanity do not mingle.

Q: So going home means to deliberately depart from everything wrong within ourselves.

A: Exactly, so do it. First you will catch a faint glimpse of your restful residence, and then you will be one with it.

Q: Where are we overlooking right help?

A: A new employee at a mountain resort was instructed to repair a sign which stood on top of a hill. He was about to start the long upward hike when he was told, "Take that electric car over there. That is what it is for." Cosmic knowledge works for you. That is what it is for. Take it.

Q: Guide us toward intelligent action.

A: It is the highest form of active intelligence to let whatever is right within to grow at the expense of whatever is wrong.

Q: Please identify a common wrongness.

A: No longer waste thoughts over what others think of you, instead, think how you can be free of all such worthless thoughts.

Q: Life piles on the difficulties of frustrated plans, ill health, domestic quarrels. I never know which way to turn.

A: Whatever the difficulty there is only one way to turn. Turn to study. Study your mind, study surrounding life, study human nature, study cosmic ideas. This is turning toward the Supreme Source of Solutions. This is rejected by the self-deceived who trust in social solutions. But it is perfect guidance and great relief to those who have caught a glimpse of something higher than themselves.

Q: Where should we be cautious when seeking help?

A: Never permit a defeated person to convince you that he can help you win inner victory for he is simply exploiting you to maintain his own delusion of being a victor.

Q: Where might we make a mistake when consulting someone who really knows the answers?

A: When requesting help from an authentic teacher we must not try to impose our stale ideas upon him, for that would be like the patient telling the doctor what to do.

Q: Sometimes I feel I am on a collision course that nothing can stop.

A: It can be stopped. Something higher than your usual self can stop it. But I must ask you a question. What false condition are you willing to sacrifice in order to find this higher power?

Q: So much is asked!

A: So much is given.

Q: Our illogic causes our ills.

A: Then develop two kinds of logic. One can be called everyday logic. It keeps your day running smoothly. You use everyday logic when shopping wisely or driving safely. Spiritual logic consists of understanding and living within cosmic laws. With it you know what life is all about and have self-independence. Strong spiritual logic can build stronger everyday logic.

Q: What bars us from developing higher logic?

A: The assumption that we already have it. Remember, illogic never sees itself, as with the man who asked indignantly, “Why didn’t you say so before you spoke?”

Q: Please comment on the need for going beyond spiritual knowledge.

A: The acquisition of spiritual facts is necessary, but it is only the first section of the upward path. This section ends at the edge of a cliff. To continue to climb we must bravely leap over to the opposite cliff where essence becomes alive. The leap is made by dropping vanity over knowledge and by a willingness to become nothing in order to become everything.

Q: It seems that a misuse of imagination causes far more grief than we think.

A: Especially when people imagine they have found a source of true guidance. You can observe this everywhere in society. A group of people huddle fearfully together in a swamp, agreeing to deceive each other by

calling it a meadow. It is still a swamp, and something within every man and woman knows it.

Q: Can they escape?

A: Yes, if they are willing to do what is necessary. It is necessary at the start for a man to see how fearful and angry he becomes when his false position is questioned. Never forget that anyone in a false position will become hostile when truth touches his pretense, though he may conceal his malice by a forced exterior calmness. His very hostility proves his weakness, but he must see and admit it personally.

Q: So the first step out of the swamp is to admit that we are in fact in the swamp.

A: Correct, but let me state it a bit differently. A man must come to the point in his life where he can no longer endure the painful deception of imagining that the swamp is a meadow. He is now in both the great crisis and the great opportunity of his life. He can choose the false security of remaining with the lost and stumbling group in the swamp or he can courageously choose to work his way out.

Q: We want out, but have so little courage.

A: I will see whether you really want out. If you do, courage will come of itself.

Q: What does it mean to give up something in order to win something else of a higher nature?

A: A rich but unhappy man sought help from a real teacher. “I will give up much of my wealth to find peace,” promised the man. Replied the teacher, “No, no. That is too easy. Give up your vanity.” Said the visitor, “I will also give up my public prominence.” The teacher said, “No, no. That is too easy. Give up your pride over giving up so much.”

Q: Many people would like to seek this new world but fear the absence of guidance.

A: Dare to start the search for the inner kingdom and instant guidance will appear, like seeing roadside signs pointing toward a distant castle.

Q: How can we receive something higher and better?

A: Uplift your wish, for wishes are answered according to their own level of quality or nonquality.

Q: May we hear more about the upward path?

A: Do you remember the first time you really did something about your life? Perhaps you bought your first book of cosmic facts or attended your first truth-class or wrote your first letter seeking information about higher studies. There will be many more first times, each one a bit higher than the one before. For the first time you will see how heartache can be used to end heartache, that self-release is not a terror but a victory.

Q: With right inner work we will eventually hear something that is not of our usual nature?

A: Correct. The need to follow the first faint whisperings of truth is illustrated by an explorer’s experience. Lost in the jungle, he wandered helplessly for days. Then a faint and different kind of sound filtered through

the trees. He followed the sound all the way to its source—a magnificent waterfall, a tourist attraction, where he received help.

Q: I don't know how to grasp these ideas.

A: Choose to grasp them. Persistent choice toward rightness generates power for perception. Remember that cosmic fact and mental myth cannot occupy the same place at the same time, any more than two hands can occupy the same glove. So choose what is truly right for you.

Q: As hard as I try to convince myself that I know what it is all about, doubt creeps in to spoil my daydream.

A: Then stop involving yourself with things that must pile doubt upon doubt, and turn to celestial matters about which there is not doubt.

Q: Is there really a way to uplift human behavior?

A: There is no way to behave higher than the level of cosmic insight allows, but there is a way to raise the level of insight and therefore a way to uplift right behavior.

Q: Please describe this way.

A: Through inner effort one must first arrive at the place where he is capable of learning something new, like someone who willingly walks through the rain to reach a library.

Q: What do you mean by authentic help?

A: Society can only make an awkward and unsatisfactory attempt to help anyone out of trouble. The authentic help these teachings shows him how to stay out of trouble in the first place.

Q: Why do we live as we do?

A: Everyone lives as he does because of the hourly choices he makes. Life-change becomes possible by changing the choices. For example, do you choose to understand a difficult situation or do you choose to fight it? Fighting prevents understanding. Choose to understand. That invites royal guidance.

Q: I like the idea of royal guidance.

A: A cosmic fact is like a king's messenger who arrives at the right time and place with perfect instructions.

Q: Give us something to build receptivity.

A: If told we are not yet capable of understanding something it is not an insult to our intelligence but a helpful step toward eventual understanding.

Q: Please speak about daily inner action.

A: Suppose each morning you sail the sea in a different kind of boat. One morning you roam around in a small motorboat, the next day on a yacht, and the third day in a rowboat. Daily spiritual work is like that. One day might be spent in reading, the next day in alert watchfulness of thoughts and feelings, the next day you take part in a group discussion. But all methods increase self-insight.

Q: Why does truth attract us?

A: Whether presently realized or not, there is something in you which is not of your usual nature. It is this unique nature which responds with interest to various truths in this class, which makes you feel something entirely different. You are like a botanist seeking a healthful herb in the forest. Catching your first faint fragrance of the herb, you know you are heading toward it.

Q: Misleading advice has been heaped upon my head since childhood. I can't afford any more of it.

A: Never listen to the advice of anyone who does not repeat the advice, "Look at yourself, work on yourself, rescue yourself."

Q: What are our sources of learning?

A: Learn from books and experiences, but above all learn from mental silence.

Q: The principle of self-guidance appeals to me, but seems so difficult and mysterious.

A: Only because you have not seriously tried it. Accurate self-guidance is as close as your own hand. Take a time when you feel bored. See that boredom exists only because your psychic system is operating incorrectly. That right first step in self-guidance can lead to additional help. Have a confident attitude toward self-guidance. That is important.

Q: A man is urged to counsel himself, but look at where self-counsel has dragged him!

A: Up to now you have listened to counsel from what you have called your self, which is not you at all, but a bundle of mechanical habits. See this clearly, after which you will catch your first glimpse of the new nature within. This new nature is cosmic consciousness, which counsels you perfectly.

Q: You have made one thing clear. Our problem is in thinking we can do without spiritual wisdom.

A: If you can control a kite without a string, you can control your life without spiritual knowledge.

Q: I doubt my own answers, which is frightening.

A: It should be one of the most encouraging events of your life. It is wonderful to no longer have the kind of answers which have hurt you over the years. Be glad that your doubts are trying to teach you something new.

Q: How do we use spiritual facts wrongly?

A: A man was told about a buried treasure. He obtained a shovel. But being a foolish man he did an incredible thing. Instead of digging up the treasure he ran around boasting to everyone about his shovel! This is the unhappy state of those who preach spiritual facts while mistaking them for inner wealth. The treasure is found only when the false self yields to spiritual facts, as when one desires something higher than himself.

Q: We dimly realize the existence of something much higher, but we fear to let go of our earthly toys.

A: In the spiritual quest it is quite usual to fear the loss of things we consider valuable, but at a later stage we see their emptiness, and want nothing more than to lose them.

Q: We need to awaken to true values. How?

A: By remembering the single sentence I will now give you. All can go well outside, but if it is not going well inside, what is the outside worth?

Q: You once said we would win a new sense of rightness. You were right. I have attended these classes for only a short time but already I sense the rightness in being here.

A: Association with right ideas is essential. You catch the falling apples by remaining in the orchard.

Q: I have plenty of work to do on myself, so I don't claim to be a teacher of others. But what can help me to help people who ask me about these higher facts?

A: Never forget the utter terror that people have for the truth that could set them free. You may think it an exaggeration when I tell you that people fear truth above all else. It is no exaggeration. The slightest hint to a man that he is not the separate self he believes he is will make him terrified and rageful. People are so accustomed to prison life that they take the cell as liberty and the open field as the cell. Remembrance of this will help you help others—and yourself.

Q: The world's surrounding evil is terrifying.

A: An evil merchant in ancient Arabia wanted to threaten and terrify a competitor. He wrote a vicious note prophesying doom for the other man, and gave it to a servant for delivery. But the servant returned with the note, explaining, "There was no one home to receive it." The evil of the world cannot reach anyone who is not home to it, whose spiritual level is above evil.

Q: Why is rightness so remote?

A: Trying to get rightness from a self-centered mind is like trying to get perfume from a brick.

Q: I wonder whether others have the same strange timidity that I sometimes have. I hesitate to submit to new ideas for fear they may rob me of my usual intelligence.

A: This is a common fear, especially with beginners. Submission to truth does not mean to abandon our intelligence, as we falsely fear. It means to drop that familiar but self-punishing train of thoughts we wrongly call intelligence. Go beyond this mere label and you will find Cosmic Intelligence.

Q: We are told to surrender ourselves to God, to Reality. I am not sure what this means.

A: Right surrender is to voluntarily detect and abandon everything inside you that causes trouble. Can you think of a happier task?

Q: So both the problem and the solution are within?

A: Like handing a block of pine to a skilled wood carver, give yourself over to that right part of you that really knows how to create something new, for it does exist within you.

Q: Where do we fail to understand cosmic law?

A: A foolish man observed a breeze and declared, “How nice it would be to make that breeze my own.” So placing a bucket toward the breeze he tried to capture it. Failure made him bitter and resentful. He felt betrayed by nature. Foolish? No more foolish than those who believe it is both good and possible to capture life for their exclusive possession.

Q: I have understood these higher facts for a long time, but nothing seems to happen.

A: Try to understand a fact with your feelings as well as with your mind. For instance, try to feel the fact that the physical world you inhabit is not the only world.

Q: The right feelings can help us?

A: Because knocking and entering are entirely different actions. Knocking is necessary, consisting of reading books, attending meetings, asking questions. But entrance requires much bolder action. It requires one to enter into himself, to uncover hidden motives, to see contradictions, and to realize his actual power for self-change.

Q: We need a reliable compass.

A: Certainly. That is why you are urged to collect pieces of knowledge. Collect the items needed to make a compass and truth will show you how to build it.

Q: I now have a fondness for some of the lessons which once appeared very severe. That is my personal miracle.

A: Imagine yourself driving a long highway leading from a low desert to a lofty mountain. You stop at various places along the way for a drink of water. You discover that the higher you go the purer the water becomes. Lessons about life are like that. As we drive upward they become more meaningful, more helpful.

BASIC FACTS FOR DAILY GUIDANCE

- a. A right aim guides you to the right place.
- b. Learn to hear Truth's constant invitation.
- c. Life is different when your mind is different.
- d. Discover the pure power of cosmic logic.
- e. Courage comes to whoever really wants out.
- f. Your real self and cosmic guidance are one.
- g. As insights rises, so does beneficial action.
- h. Think of mental silence as a perfect teacher.
- i. As we lose earthly toys we gain cosmic gold.
- j. All these facts build a reliable compass!

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