

WHOM TO FOLLOW?

Intent of the Story:

- ✓ *The best guide is experience.*
- ✓ *Trust an experienced teacher rather than a learned book*
- ✓ *Sticking to rules and guides misguides us.*
- ✓ *In our way to God, an experienced guide is better than a doctoral thesis.*

The Story

There was a formidable mountain range. Once upon a time, a traveler had to cross on foot those inaccessible peaks. He was afraid. He did not know the way. He managed to secure a detailed map of that region. In that map all the roads, tracks and foot-paths of those mountains were clearly marked and described. The traveler said to himself: "The map is very good; however, if I could travel with a local man, one who knows the way himself, I would feel more confident."

As luck would have it, he met a native of the land who happened to travel to the same destination, a man who knew the terrain he trod as the palm of his hand.

Both men set out together. They walked side by side. Our traveler, with the map in his hands, was checking every twist and turn of the path his traveling companion took. Our traveler was very pleased. His companion was exactly trekking along the paths and footways as were shown in the map.

All of a sudden, to the traveler's shock, his companion deviated from the route shown on the map. Alarmed, he showed the map to him and remonstrated: "Friend why are you not following the map? The path you have taken is not indicated here! Now, I am afraid to follow you now! We may get lost and perish!"

His native companion explained: "You may not be aware that the path marked out in the map was recently washed away by a landslide. It is not usable any longer. Don't worry. Trust me! Not your map! I'll show you another path. Follow me!" The traveler refused and said: "No! No! I'll not follow you. How do you expect me to follow you when the path you take is not marked in the map? For me, there is no surer guide than the map."

The native tried to convince him. He argued: "Friend, I have experience of these mountains. I was born here and I grew up here. Follow me! I know where I am going. Trust me!"

The traveler disbelieved him. He said: "In spite of all your assurances, if you are not going to follow the path as shown in the map, I'll not follow you, but rather I'll go alone according to the map!"

And with that they parted ways, the traveler led by the map, the native of the land by his experience.

The native reached his destination on time. About our traveler we don't know. He was never seen or heard of any more.

POINTS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Suggestions for the Moderator.

Ask the participants to reply - in writing - to the questions below

Next, let them share their replies with the group.

Finally, initiate a discussion. Draw conclusions relevant to their live situations

Lastly, lead them through a short introspection to discover their attitudes

1. What happened to the traveler and why?
2. What are the dangers of being a "sticker" for rules and regulations?
3. Who is more reliable, a "learned" man or an "experienced" person? Why?
4. What is better "bookish" knowledge or "experiential" knowledge? Why?
5. In our way to God - in spiritual things - what is more reliable a good book or a good guide? Why?
6. Why do we often enough we find it difficult to entrust ourselves in the hands of experienced guides?
7. Whom would you consider an expert guide?
8. Find any other lessons from the story? Please, share them with us.

IDEAS HELPFUL FOR DISCUSSION OR FOR A MINI-INPUT

- To be good guides we have to have experienced what we teach.
- Experience comes first; rules. Norms and guides are written later.
- Those who drew the map, they walked first over those mountain many times over..
- Bookish knowledge is good, but not enough.
- We "really know" only what we experienced.
- Rules and norms should be only guides, not our masters.
- All rules have exceptions. Exceptions confirm the rule.
- Plain rational, linear thinking is not sufficient in life. We should trust our experiences, inspirations and intuitions,
- Blindly sticking to rules, maps and blueprints may lead us to disaster.
- One think is to know God and another is to know about him.
- Only he who has experienced God can let others to know Him.
- Theology is "knowing about God," mysticism is "knowing Him"
- We come to know God on our knees, no on our study table
- It's not easy to allow oneself to be guided; it curtails our freedom.
- Make sure the guide you trust, but when you trust him, trust him implicitly.
- Trust does not know measures. It's all or nothing. It is imponderable.
- Trust is not merited, but won.

- In order to win trust, be 100% honest.
- When you teach values, remember, they cannot be taught by word, but only by example.
- “Experience is the mother Science.”

The Little Crab and His Mother

Experience is the best guide.

Values are not taught but caught

Manners, politeness, demeanor are to be experienced first, then practised

Mother Crab kept shouting and upbraiding her little son:

“Can you not walk straight, my son, like other children do?”

At last, tired of it all, the little Crab replied: “Mum. Kindly, first, show me how do you walk straight, then, I’ll learn from you how to do it! “