

How to be a Messiah?

I lay on my back under the Fleet, wiping oil from the lower fuselage. Somehow the engine was throwing less oil now than it had thrown before. Shimoda flew one passenger, then came over and sat on the grass as I worked.

“Richard, how can you hope to impress the world when everybody else works for their living and you run around all irresponsible from day to day in your crazy biplane selling passenger rides?” He was testing me again. “There’s a question you gonna get more than once.”

“Well, Donald, Part One: I do not exist to impress the world. I exist to live my life in a way that will make me happy .”

“OK. Part Two?”

“Part Two: Everybody else is free to do whatever they feel like doing, for a living. Part Three: Responsible is Able to Respond, able to answer for the way we choose to live. There’s only one person we have to answer to, of course, and that is...?”

“... ourselves,” Don said, replying for the imaginary crowd of seekers sitting around.

“We don’t even have to answer to ourselves, if we don’t feel like it... there’s nothing wrong with being irresponsible. But most of us find it more interesting to know why we act as we do, why we make our choices just so - whether we choose to watch a bird or step on an ant or work for money at something we’d rather not be doing.” I winced a little. “Is that too long an answer?”

He nodded. “Way too long.”

“OK... How do you hope to impress the world... “ I rolled out from under the plane and rested for a while in the shade of 1 wings. “How about I allow the world to live as it chooses, and I allow me to live as I choose.”

He threw a happy proud smile at me. “Spoken like a true messiah! Simple, direct, quotable, and it doesn’t answer the question unless somebody takes the time to think carefully about it.”

“Try me some more.” It was delicious, to watch my own mind work, when we did this.

“Master,” he said, “I want to be loved, I’m kind, I do unto others as I would have them do unto me, but still I don’t have any friends and I’m all alone.’ How are you going to answer that one?”

“Beats me,” I said. “I don’t have the foggiest idea what to tell you.”

“WHAT? “

“Just a little humor, Don, liven up the evening. A little harmless change-of-pacer, there.”

“You’d best be plenty careful how you liven up the evenings. Problems are not jokes and games to the people who come to you, unless they are highly advanced themselves, and that sort know they’re their own messiah.

You are being given the answers, so speak them out. Try that ‘Beats me’ stuff and you’ll see how fast a mob can burn a man at the stake.”

I drew myself up proudly “Seeker, thou comest to me for an answer, and unto thee I do answer: The Golden Rule doesn’t work. How would you like to meet a masochist who did unto others as he

would have them do unto him? Or a worshiper of the Crocodile God, who craves the honor of being thrown alive into the pit? Even the Samaritan, who started the whole thing... what made him think that the man he found lying at the roadside wanted to have oil poured in his wounds? What if the man was using those quiet moments to heal himself spiritually enjoying the challenge of it?" I sounded convincing, to me.

"Even if the Rule was changed to *Do unto others as they want to be done to*, we can't know how anybody but ourselves wants to be done to. What the Rule means, and how we apply it honestly, is this: *Do unto others as you truly feel like doing unto others*. Meet a masochist with this rule and you do not have to flog him with his whip, simply because that is what he would want you to do unto him. Nor are you required to throw the worshiper to the crocodiles." I looked at him. "Too wordy?"

"As always. Richard, you are going to lose ninety percent of your audience unless you learn to *keep it short!*"

"Well, what's wrong with losing ninety percent of my audience?"

I shot back at him. "What's wrong with losing ALL my audience? I know what I know and I talk what I talk! And if that's wrong then that's just too bad. The airplane rides are three dollars cash!"

"You know what?" Shimoda stood up, brushing the hay off blue jeans.

"What?" I said petulantly.

"You just graduated. How does it feel to be a Master?"

"Frustrating as hell."

He looked at me with an infinitesimal smile. "You get used to it," he said.

(Richard Bach, *Illusions*)