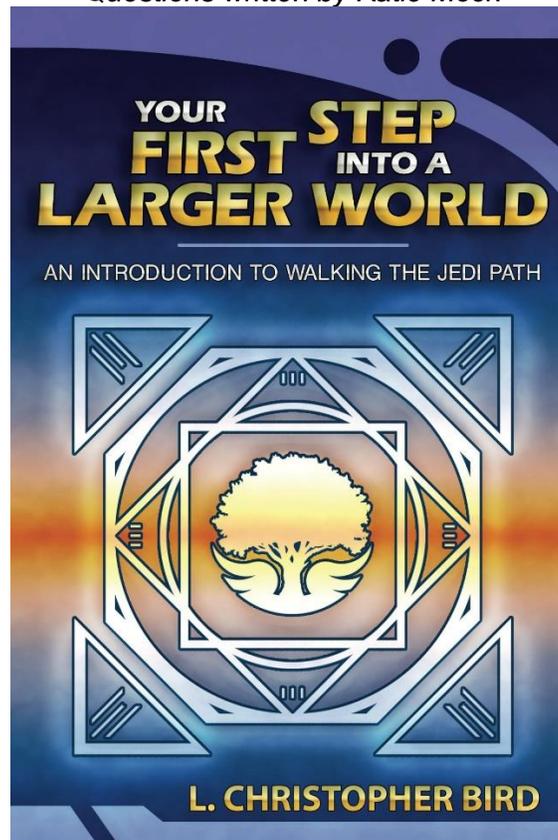


Discussion Questions for the book Your First Step Into a Larger World by L. Christopher Bird

Questions written by Katie Mock



Introduction:

- Opie Macleod coined the oft-used Jedi phrase of “world betterment through self-betterment.” Do you think this is true or not? What are the benefits and pitfalls of such an approach?
- The author writes “We have the belief that good people will make a good world.” Do you agree?
- What defines a Jedi? How do you get to call yourself one? Why?
- You will hear the phrase “Jedi of quality” in this book--is there a difference between a Jedi and a Jedi of quality? Is that distinction useful?

Chapter 1 What is the Force?:

- What is the force for you? Why do you think that? What benefit does the concept bring to your practice or life?
- Do we need to believe in the Force (however you define it) to be Jedi? Why or why not?
- How have you fostered or rejected connection in your own life?
- Why does the author split the force into internal and external elements or views? Do you find this approach helpful or reflective of your experience?

Chapter 2 The Pillars of Jedi Strength:

- How do you use the Force as a Jedi to support your path and goals? What blocks you from doing so?
- What kinds of ignorance do you encounter in your life, both in yourself and others?
- What do you think causes ignorance? How do you approach cultivating knowledge?
- Who is responsible for your training? Why is it that important to the nature of the Jedi path?
- What does discipline look like to you? What does failure look like when you prioritize discipline over success?

Chapter 3 The Jedi Code:

- Is the Code worthwhile? What value do you find in it (in any format)?
- We hear the phrase “ruled by emotion” often in Jedi writings-- what does that mean? How does the phrase make you feel about your own emotions?
- What does emotional balance look or feel like?
- Is there such a thing as a good or bad emotion? Is it wrong to feel strong emotions as a Jedi?
- Is non-attachment a helpful approach for you? Why or why not?
- How can a Jedi embrace their emotions while remaining in control of their actions?
- What three things, big or small, have you been wrong about recently?
- What ideas are so important to you that losing them is scary?
- How do you practice mental flexibility? How do you identify your own confirmation bias?
- Why is empathy so important to defeating ignorance?
- How does serenity help us understand and motivate our feelings?
- What is chaos? How do you feel about it?
- How do your feelings about death motivate or limit you? Do you find the Code helpful in grappling with those feelings?

Chapter 4 Compassion and your Sphere of Influence:

- “Each Jedi is at the center of their sphere of influence. Because of this, if we are to affect positive change in the world, we must first better ourselves.” Do you agree? Why or why not? What pitfalls or benefits do you see in this approach?
- Describe your sphere of influence. What are you truly responsible for? What can you actually influence?
- Do you find the Jedi Creed useful or beneficial? Why or why not? Does it supersede the Code, come below it, or work in tandem with it?
- How do you interrogate your own privilege and experience?
- How do you hold yourself accountable as a Jedi?
- Guardians who defend and protect--is this the job of a Jedi? Why or why not?
- Do you need good intentions, good action, both, or neither to create a Jedi outcome for a situation?
- Do you find the Pillars of Jedi Strength (The Force, Knowledge, Self-Discipline) to be a useful structure for training? If you could choose the pillars, what would they be?
- How do you respond to mistakes as a Jedi?
- What does an authentic self-reflection practice look like for you?

Chapter 5 Attachment and Non-Attachment:

- How would you define attachment and non-attachment?
- “We are inspired by Star Wars media, we do not emulate it unthinkingly.” Does this happen in the Jedi community? Have you done it yourself? What does correct inspiration and aspiration look like?

- Are all attachments motivated by “greed and selfishness” or are there other motivations?
- Is attachment really a bad thing for a Jedi? Why or why not?
- Does the idea of “Fear leads to anger, anger leads to hate, hate leads to suffering” hold up in real life for you?
- The book claims Lucas identified a path to suffering. Did Lucas add anything substantive to the Buddhist roots of the above phrase?
- Non-attachment is a Buddhist idea--does it belong in the Jedi path? Are there ways in which we ignore the roots of our inspirations when they are not fictional? Is that helpful or not?
- What are you attached to? How do you judge whether or not these are healthy attachments?
- What expectations do you have of the path and yourself? How do they motivate you or hold you back?
- Do the three Jedi Pillars of Strength (The Force, Knowledge, Self-Discipline) feel sufficient as a way to recognize and let go of attachments? Is there another path that might work better, or other elements you would include?
- “We must bring our will to bear to shape our very mind and thought processes.” Do you think it is will that is the most powerful tool here? What about compassion or empathy? Which works better for you?
- What does it feel like to have let go an unhealthy attachment?

Chapter 6 Focus and Attitude:

- What is the difference between religion and philosophy? Which is the Jedi Path? Why?
- Is the difference between the two useful or applicable to your path?
- “Your focus determines your reality.” Is this true? Why or why not? How do you separate it from problematic ideas like “The Law of Attraction” where people deserve the negative things that happen to them because they must have manifested them?
- How do you learn to trust your own senses? What events or ideas can separate you from them? How does one reconnect?
- When was a time you remember consciously shaping or changing your mind about something?
- When was a time your focus determined your reality, good or bad?
- When we think about benefit and utility, what kinds of benefits count? Are smaller or more personal benefits like ‘it’s fun’ and ‘it makes me happy’ sufficient?
- Does a Jedi of Quality have flaws? In the context of focus and attitude, what describes a Jedi of quality to you? Is that still a useful term?
- Pema Chodron describes our first emotional reaction to things as a ‘craving’. What do you think of that?
- What does it mean to sit with our discomfort? Is this an important Jedi skill?
- What makes Jedi different from non-Jedi? Is that distinction meaningful to you?
- Do you think “humility with confidence” is an attitude worth cultivating? Would you call it something different?
- What do healthy boundaries look like as a Jedi? How do you build them? How are those boundaries tied into the Jedi Pillars of Strength?
- Is mindfulness valuable to you? What does it feel like, and what do you gain from it?
- One could argue that hope is the most valuable quality in a Jedi. Do you think that is true?
- Hope, confidence, and faith--how are these concepts tied together on the Jedi path?

Chapter 7 Diplomacy and Form Zero:

- How does one train in conflict resolution? What training have you done or would you like to do in this arena?
- Are negotiate or fight the only options?
- How can you tell when it is worth negotiating or fighting, and when it is better to walk away?
- The book says we must take a “reasoned approach” to beginning conflict; is reason really what should lead us as Jedi? If not, what should lead us?
- Alex Bird has said “Do not make monsters of your rivals.” What does this mean in the context of conflict resolution?
- When was the last time you made a new enemy? How did it happen?
- How do you assess whether or not you are in the right? Does it matter? Why?
- How do you cultivate an open mind when it comes to other points of view? Where do we draw the line?
- Fandom-switch time: “The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few, or the one.” Agree or disagree? Why? How does that apply to conflict resolution?
- Do you think this chapter is written in a way that assumes the author is right? Do you think they are?
- “If one has to fight, fight well, and fight with honor” Do you agree with this sentiment? What does it mean to fight well or fight with honor? Do those concepts have benefit and utility in the sphere of conflict resolution?
- How do societal and relational power dynamics interact with Form Zero philosophy?
- Is non-violence always correct? What about non-resistance, or non-injury? WHY or why not? Are any of them appropriate in a conflict (especially a verbal or emotional conflict)?
- Do you listen when other Jedi critique your methods? How can you tell who is correct?
- What does it look like to engage in conflict resolution gently? Can you give an example?
- “The point of a negotiation is to come to an accord where all parties walk away front he table satisfied”. Is this the point? Are there times it isn’t?
- What part does empathy have to play in conflict resolution?

Chapter 8 Meditative Practice:

- Why should anyone meditate? Why should a Jedi meditate? What’s the difference?
- Is meditation the only way to connect with the force? Or is all connection with the Force meditation?
- Do you have a meditative practice? What does it look like? If you don’t, why not, and what do you want out of it?
- Is meditation difficult for you? Why or why not? How can you play to your strengths to build a practice?
- What is the purpose of meditation on the Jedi path?
- What does it mean to connect with the Force?
- What benefits have you gained or would you like to gain from meditation? Make a plan to work towards them.

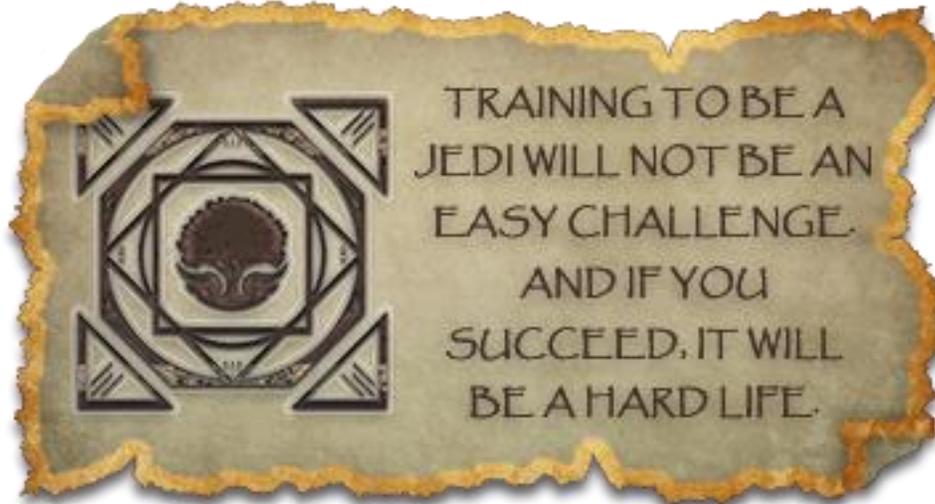
Chapter 9 Physical Practice and the Martial Arts:

- Why does physical fitness matter to a Jedi? Should it?
- What are the pitfalls of focusing on physical fitness, especially from a social justice standpoint?
- How does taking care of your body support your emotional and mental wellbeing?
- What is the value of health, first to you and your path, and in society at large? Is that a good thing?
- “It is more important to lose well than to win poorly.” Is this always true?

- The author correlates Aikido philosophy with Jedi philosophy. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- How are the three pillars represented in our approach to physical wellness?
- What does physical wellness look like for you?
- Is there benefit an utility for real Jedi to explore martial practices?
- Why do real life Jedi still value or identify with the image of the sword or lightsaber?

Chapter 10 Live In Your Own Temple, Be Your Own Master:

- Why do people crave mentorship, both on and off the path?
- Have you ever had a good mentor in any area of your life? What made them good at it, or a good fit for you?
- “The fantasy of finding a remote Jedi temple, climbing its steps, and finding our Master at the top waiting for us is a potent one.” Is it for you? Why?
- The author refers to the real Jedi path as more mundane. Is it? Is that a good or bad thing? Why do many on the Jedi path want otherwise?
- “I think it is better to have had no teacher at all than to have had a bad teacher.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Do you think the master/apprentice system has or can have value? Why or why not?
- What illusions did you have about the path when you started?
- How have you or do you balance the experiences of others with your own instincts when it comes to walking the path?
- Who or what defines your path?



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