

## ***Two kinds of ignorance***

No matter what you're trying to learn, you can gain a new skill or absorb new information only if you first admit that you don't already know everything about that particular topic. In the spiritual quest also, a receptive attitude is the first step in opening up to greater spiritual wisdom.

Here I describe two kinds of ignorance: positive ignorance and negative ignorance:

- ***Positive ignorance is when you don't know and you know you don't know.*** This humble awareness keeps you open and receptive to divine guidance and helps you to educate, grow, and improve yourself.
- ***Negative ignorance is when you don't know, but you think you do know.*** This state of mind is really a double ignorance that closes the door to your own growth. Thinking you know when you don't know is like traveling to a party on the other side of town with no idea of where the house is, but being too proud and stubborn to admit it and ask for directions. Negative ignorance makes you drive around in circles and miss the party of spiritual delight!

Once, a university professor went to visit a famous Zen master. While the master quietly served tea, the professor talked on and on about all the intricacies of Zen philosophy. The master filled the visitor's cup to the brim and then kept pouring. The professor watched this overflowing cup for several seconds, until he could no longer restrain himself, and finally blurted out, "It's overfull! No more will go in!"

"*You* are like this cup," the master replied, "How can I show you Zen until you first empty your cup?"