

LOVE  
TRUMPS  
KARMA™

Uncovering the Truth  
You Know You Know

Karyn Henley



Karyn Henley Resources

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by Karyn Henley

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A down-loadable leader's study guide is available online for those who want to use this book as a 13-week course of study. You can find it at

[www.lovetrumpskarma.com](http://www.lovetrumpskarma.com).

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## Is God Playing a Trick?

Starbucks  
New York City  
Summer, 2003

Adam wove his way to the only vacant table, settled in, and tasted his chai. Full. Spicy. Maybe his life would be that way now. He had been in New York for only six weeks. Classes at the university were starting to feel routine, and he already had several new friends. One of them, Mei Li, plopped down in the cushy chair across from him. "What did you get?" asked Adam.

"Frappucino," said Mei Li. "Mocha." She closed her eyes and sipped.

Adam studied the ink-black brush strokes on Mei Li's tee-shirt. "What does the writing on your shirt say?" he asked.

Mei Li opened her eyes and looked down. "This? These are the Chinese characters for *Peace*." She pointed to Adam. "What's on yours?"

Adam had to look. He was relieved when he saw it wasn't a mustard stain. "It's a cross."

"Does it stand for anything?"

"Well, yeah," said Adam. "It means I believe in Jesus."

Mei Li rested her elbows on the table. "What does *that* mean?"

Adam took a swig of chai. What *did* believing in Jesus mean? Obeying the Ten Commandments. Going to church. Reading the Bible. Listening to Christian music. It suddenly

sounded kind of shallow. And. . . well . . . now that he thought about it, he wasn't sure he really believed all that himself. But then, what *did* believing in Jesus mean? He took another swallow of chai, looked at Mei Li and shrugged. "I don't know," he said.

### Nashville, Tennessee

#### Fall, 2004

"There's Pepsi and diet Pepsi in the fridge," said Emily. "Popcorn's coming." She shoved the flat bag of kernels into the microwave, snapped the door shut, and punched the snack button. The microwave hummed. She turned around and watched her friends opening chips and dips and drinks. They seemed to be making the new girl Tara feel welcome. Emily felt sorry for Tara having to move here just before her senior year. Emily would have hated leaving all her friends to move to a place where she didn't know anyone.

Emily's friend Kate grabbed a handful of chips. "As soon as the popcorn's done, let's go sit on the side porch," she said.

Tara skimmed one chip across the onion dip. "I love the way the side porch overlooks your yard, Emily. The birdbath. The garden. In the moonlight it's so Zen."

"Zen?" said Kate, a chip halfway to her mouth.

"Very peaceful," said Tara. "Very Zen."

"Isn't Zen a religion of demon worship?" asked Phoebe, clinking ice into her glass.

Tara's eyebrows went up, and she laughed. "Of course not," she said. "It's just a very peaceful religion. What religion are you?"

"Well. . .all of us are Christians," said Phoebe.

"That's nice," said Tara. "Whatever works for you. All religions are good. You know, whatever brings you to the spiritual Energy."

Phoebe's mouth was open, but Emily could tell that Phoebe couldn't find any words.

The microwave beeped, and Emily pulled out the hot bag. A buttery aroma filled the air. "Popcorn anyone?" she called.

### Burlington, Vermont

#### Spring, 2002

Daniel's English class scooted their chairs into a circle, the way they did every Friday. Everyone flipped through their notebooks and pulled out the poems they'd been assigned to write. One by one, each person read his or her poem aloud.

Zoe's poem was about an angel appearing to a girl named Mary who was smoking in the girl's restroom. The angel told Mary she would have a baby. Everybody laughed.

Daniel was shocked at first, thinking the poem was irreverent. On the other hand, it made Daniel wonder what if. What if Gabriel really had appeared to Mary that way, in today's world?

After Zoe's reading, students began discussing the poem.

"Daniel, do you have any comments?" asked Mr. Tolan.

Daniel scratched his ear. "Well. . .I think the angel and Mary are very powerful archetypes. They hold a lot of strong meaning. I wonder if you've thought about all the symbolism that people might read into the poem. I mean, does the baby grow up to save the world or die for someone or anything like that?"

Zoe wrinkled her nose. "I'm not very religious," she said. "I only recently found out that Christmas and Easter had something in common."

"Good point about the symbolism, Daniel," said Mr. Tolan. "Anyone else notice that?"

The discussion went on. Daniel wondered who else had no idea what Christmas and Easter were really about.

## Northridge, California

Fall, 2001

Meggie joined the rest of her geology class around the sand table at the front of the room.

Mr. Rhinehart had tilted the table and was now pouring water onto the rocks and sand in it. "Millions of year ago, as the Ice Age came to a close, the glacial melt raised the ocean levels and sent rivers streaming overland, carving out canyons like so."

The water trickled over the sand and began washing out a path the length of the table.

"Of course *some* people say a great big finger came down out of the sky and formed canyons like this, Meggie." Mr. Rhinehart glared at her as he drew his finger through the sand, making a small gorge.

## Atlanta, Georgia

Winter, 2004

Derek sprawled across the couch, reading his lit assignment. His little sister Berry pranced through the room and into the kitchen, where Mom was stirring up some dinner.

"You know, I think there are lots of gods," said Berry. "Jesus is just one of them."

Derek shot his gaze through the kitchen door. This was going to be good.

Mom's eyes were wide, her mouth had dropped open, and her spoon was frozen in time, dripping over the bowl.

"What makes you say that?" Mom said at last.

"My teacher told us that at school," said Berry. "And I think she's right."

*From True Believer by Virginia Euwer Wolff:*

*"I don't mean to be mean to Jesus in my thoughts. . . But I don't get how he hates so many millions of people and sends them down to Hell."*

## Thailand

University of Chulalongkorn

Ken Rideout lived in Thailand as a missionary for over 40 years. As well as going to Thai villages to teach and preach, he also taught classes in schools and universities. During one of his classes, several young men were laughing and talking, so Ken asked them what they were talking about.

One of the young men stood. "You foreigners travel 12,000 miles to tell us God loves us, God is love, Jesus is God's Son," he said. "You expect us to believe that Jesus raised the dead, walked on water, and did other miracles. Yet you tell us that if we do not believe your Jesus, we will die and perish forever, condemned by your God. Yours is just a narrow-minded religion. Our religion is broad. We do not condemn anyone. When we listen to you Christians, we see that some of you do not even believe that the other Christians are being saved. You condemn one another. We don't even know which missionary teaches the truth."

Another student asked, "Why do you believe that Jesus is God's Son?"

"The Bible teaches that He is," Ken answered.

"Why do you believe the Bible?" the student asked.

A third young man said, "You say God created the heavens and the earth and the first man and woman. God put the man and woman in the Garden of Eden, a paradise where there was no death and no sin. Then this Satan came and tempted them. Who created Satan? Where did he come from? Did God create Satan to tempt people? Then you say that because of this sin, death came upon the world, and the man and woman were cast out of the Garden of Eden. Wickedness and corruption came into the world. Then God sent Jesus to die for the sins of the people. All who believe on Jesus can be saved and go to heaven. All who do not believe will die condemned. You say heaven is a paradise. Will there be sin there, as there was in the paradise of Eden?"

“There will be no sin in heaven,” Ken said. “For Satan and his angels will be destroyed.”

“Why didn’t God do that the first time, instead of leaving sin and wickedness, pain and torture in the world?” the student asked. “You say that the masses of the world are going to perish under God’s condemnation. What is God doing? Playing a game?”

\* \* \* \* \*

### Asking Questions

All of these scenes are based on true stories. Except for the last scene, names and places have been changed so no one gets embarrassed that their story is being told. I’ve chosen these stories, because they represent the real world we live in. You probably have experienced similar situations yourself. If you haven’t, it’s almost a sure thing that within the next few years, you will.

You’ve also probably been taught a lot about the Bible, about Jesus, about the way Christians should talk, act, and worship. And somewhere along the way, you’ve probably become a believer yourself. Why? Why do you believe?

Do you have Buddhist friends yet? If you don’t, you probably will. All of their lives, your Buddhist friends have been taught, “Do good. Do good. Do good.” They have been taught the Buddhists’ five precepts:

1. I will refrain from destroying life.
2. I will refrain from taking what is not given.
3. I will refrain from wrong-doing in sexual desires.
4. I will refrain from false speech, that is lies, backbiting, harsh speech, and idle chatting.
5. I will refrain from distilled and fermented intoxicants which produce heedlessness.

On the other hand, you were taught to follow Jesus’ teachings and the Ten Commandments, which include “Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not commit adultery. Do not lie.” These commandments sound a lot like the Buddhist’s five precepts.

You may also have (or you will have) friends who are Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu. Most of them will be good people, good neighbors who give and serve and help. Many of them will be kinder and less judgmental of you than some Christian people you know. Are Christians any better than they are? What makes *your* beliefs right?

... we are going to take a look at what we all, as human beings together on this planet, have in common.

Lots of Christians are afraid to ask these questions. Some of them are afraid to even think about *karma* or *dhamma* (also known as *dharma*) or the *Supreme Brahman* or the *Tao* or *Zen*, probably because they think these religions are just demon worship. And while some of these religions do believe in demons (though they try to appease them rather than worship them), that is not all that these religions teach, and it does not hurt to learn about these religions. Some people don’t want you to look into these religions, because they are afraid you will be deceived and convert to Zen or Taoism or something.

But it’s important to figure out what you believe and why. So, while we’re *not* going to do an in-depth study of Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Taoism, and Islam in this book, we *are* going to take a look at what we all, as human beings together on this planet, have in common. We are going to look for the truth that we *know* we know. And after you’ve gone through this book, more than likely you’ll never again have to wonder what you believe or why.