There was once a king who wanted to know three things: the right time to do everything, the most necessary people to pay attention to, and the most important thing to do.

He thought that knowing these things would ensure his success.

He announced that he would reward anyone who could teach him these things.

Many people traveled to his palace, but they all provided different answers to his questions.

Regarding the first question, some said that the king should make a detailed schedule so that he could always know the perfect time to do everything.

Others claimed that he should take every situation into account and wait for the precise moment to act.

Still others suggested that he should consult wise men.

Equally various were the answers to the second question.

Some said that the members of the king's council were the most important people, while others mentioned priests, doctors, or warriors.

In response to the third question, some replied that science was the most important thing, whereas others insisted that it was war or religious worship.

The king was not pleased with any of the answers.
Still wishing to find the best answers to his questions, the king decided to visit an old hermit who was famous for his wisdom.

The hermit lived in a forest and met only ordinary folk, so the king disguised himself as a simple peasant.

He ordered his bodyguards to stay behind while he went on alone to seek out the hermit.

Reaching the hermit's hut, the king found the old man digging in his garden.

The hermit greeted the king and continued digging.

The king said, "I have come here to ask you three questions. How can I learn the right time to do everything? Whom do I most need to pay attention to? Finally, what is the most important thing to do?"

The hermit listened carefully but declined to respond.

"You must be tired," the king said.

"Let me help you with that."

The hermit thanked him, handing the king his spade.

The king worked for a long time, while the hermit watched him silently.

Eventually, as the sun was setting, the king stopped and said, "I came to you for answers to my questions. If you can give me none, please let me know so that I can return home."
"Someone is running toward us," the hermit said.

"Let's see who it is."

The king turned and saw a man running out of the woods.

When the man reached the king, he fell down.

The king could see blood flowing from a large wound in his stomach.

The king washed and bandaged the wound, and then he and the hermit carried the man into the hut.

The man closed his eyes and fell asleep.

Because he was completely exhausted, the king also lay down and slept.

When he awoke in the morning, the man was staring at him.

"Forgive me," the man begged.

"I don't know you, and I have no reason to forgive you," the king replied.

"You might not know me, but I know you," the man answered.

"During the last war, you killed my brother and took my property.

When I knew that you had gone to see the hermit, I decided to kill you on your way back.

However, I came across your bodyguards, who recognized me and wounded me.

Although I escaped, I would have died if you hadn't saved my life.

Now, my sons and I will serve you forever."
Lesson 5. What Matters Most

Pleased to have made friends with his enemy so easily, the king forgave the man and promised to restore his property.

After the man left, the king went outside to talk to the hermit.

"For the last time, I beg you to answer my questions," the king said.

"They've already been answered," said the hermit.

"What do you mean?" the king asked.

"If you hadn't helped me, you would've left, and that man would've attacked you.

Therefore, the most important time was when you were digging.

I was the most important person, and helping me was the most important thing.

Later, the most important time was when you cared for the man.

If you hadn't helped him, he would've died, so he was the most important person, and helping him was the most important thing.

Remember, there is only one time that is important: now!

The person that you are with is the most important person, and doing that person good is the most important thing."