
MOON ON THE WATER

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Great Lake Zen Center, Milwaukee, WI

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No Meaning is True Meaning

Zen Master Dae Kwang

The more you're attached to those mind habits that you have, the more you suffer; because you can't hold on to any of that stuff. You see it during meditation, if you watch closely. This is because meditation is no different than your everyday life, moment to moment.

Meditation is a technique we use. "Let's all sit here in the room and look at the floor and breathe in, and breathe out and say, 'clear mind, clear mind, clear mind, don't know.'" So that's just a technique. So are these precepts; they're a technique to reveal ourselves to ourselves, because the person that nobody wants to meet in this room is very close to you. It lives right inside your own skin. Usually we're doing everything we can do to get away from meeting *that* person. We're watching TV, we're drinking, we're taking drugs, we're running around like chickens with our heads cut off. There's all this kind of stuff, right? So when you sit there for 25 minutes you think, "Well, this is bullshit. Why aren't I at home watching the game?" It happens all of the time.

But the best thing about sitting is watching what you really are,

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Abbot's Corner

When to Keep, When to Break

Pete Neuwald, Abbot

We've got a lot going on the first week of February. We will start with Intensive Practice days, then have a Buddha's Eyes Opening Ceremony, followed by a Public Talk, which will lead into our weekend retreat, and then will finish with a Precepts Ceremony. That's more than we've had in a long time!

Of all the ceremonies and talks going on, I think the most important event is the Precepts Ceremony. When Sangha members take precepts they are making a commitment to help this world and to help our Sangha. What a wonderful intention! The Precepts are very important – like the finger pointing at the correct direction. Yet, our Temple Rules say, "Know when to keep them and when to break them, when they are open and when they are closed." So we can even get attached to the Precepts.

Zen Master Seung Sahn posed the following, "For example, suppose you are walking in the woods and a rabbit crosses your path and runs off to the right. A few minutes later, a hunter comes along and asks you where the rabbit went. If you tell the truth, the rabbit may be killed. If you say nothing, the hunter may choose the right path. But if you tell a lie and send him off to the left, you will save the rabbit's life."

So, in that case, maybe we break the precept not to lie so we can keep the precept not to kill, even if indirectly. Keeping and breaking precepts is tricky though. We can get attached to not worrying about breaking precepts as well.

As an example of someone who kept the precepts most compassionately, we have Hae Chung. Hae Chung was a simple, poor, wandering monk in China. Once, after being robbed, stripped naked and tied down with long grasses, the Emperor happened upon him. Lying naked like that infuriated the Emperor. He ordered his general to kill the monk. Hae Chung said, "Killing me is no problem, but could you first carefully untie the grass so it will not be harmed?" Hae Chung did not want to take the life of even the grass. That act struck the Emperor so strongly that Hae Chung was made the National Teacher of the emperor of China. Hae Chung helped many people by so strongly keeping the precept to not take life.

So, the precepts are not about us; they are not for *me* or for my own benefit. They are for all beings.

because if you find the answer to that then you find the meaning of life.

My teacher, Zen Master Seung Sahn, always said life has no meaning, . . . absolutely no meaning. To understand this, just watch what happens. If you watch it over a hundred-year period, you'll notice that everything is always coming and going very fast. So, was it meaningful to be part of the Soviet Union? Well, some people thought it was, most people thought it was crap, but they went along with it and then, . . . boom, it's gone! Right? Like that. The second most powerful country, probably ever in history, went away like that. One minute everything seems okay, the next minute they're up there with sledge hammers knocking down the Berlin Wall, everybody's dancing around, and "Ha Ha Ha, it's over!" And the same thing just about happened to us two years ago, right? It's like watching a 401k. "Whoa, what happened?"

It sounds funny but in reality you know it isn't so funny, especially when your body starts to go away, or when friends die, or your parents die. So you perceive that. **Then, once you realize that life has no meaning, you can find true meaning.** That is what Zen Master Seung Sahn called---what we in Buddhism call-- Big Meaning. And Big Meaning is in those Second Five Precepts, and that's love and compassion for other people. And that comes with the realization that all this stuff I want, you want, and all this stuff you don't want, is completely empty because it just comes and goes, comes and goes.

-- Excerpted from a Talk on April 14, 2010 at the Empty Gate Zen Center

The Five Precepts

*I vow to abstain from taking life.
I vow to abstain from taking things not given.
I vow to abstain from misconduct done in lust.
I vow to abstain from lying.
I vow to abstain from intoxicants, taken to induce heedlessness.*

The Second Five Precepts

*I vow not to talk about the faults of others.
I vow not to praise myself and put down others.
I vow not to be covetous and to be generous.
I vow not to give way to anger and to be harmonious.
I vow not to slander the three jewels (Buddha, dharma, Sangha)*

The Five Precepts

Zen Master Wu Bong

The following is a talk given by Dharma Teacher Jacob Perl (now Zen Master Wu Bong) at the Five Precepts Ceremony at the Providence Zen Center in September 1973.

The Five Precepts are a formal initiation into the Buddhist life. They are a declaration of one's faith in Buddhist practice, and in a deeper sense, faith in oneself. The vows are not meant as absolute ethical standards of what is right and what is wrong; rather, they are meant to help us in our Zen practice.

The actions that we have vowed to avoid can be the cause of many problems and a lot of suffering for those of us who have not attained the realm of no attachment. As Zen students we are taught that sitting Zen means "mind-sitting" in whatever we do. Yet in formal sitting, with all parts of the body in their prescribed position, we usually find ourselves more able to control our mind. Our body influences our mind. Likewise, we have a breathing practice that Soen Sa Nim teaches us to use in times of stress. Our breathing influences our mind, and thinking subsides. Keeping the precepts is meant to have the same kind of influence on our mind as our formal sitting or breathing practice does.

The precepts have a deeper meaning than this, though. They are guides to us, for they constantly point at what Soen Sa Nim calls our "before thinking mind." We can see this by going beyond the literal meaning of each precept.

The first precept -- no killing -- is much more than just abstention from physically killing another living thing. In fact, we are in essence inseparable from all beings, and all things in the universe. To cause harm to another is to deny our true nature. The true "no-killing I" is itself the "Big I" whose attainment is the supreme awakening of a Buddha. For us this precept includes not just killing, but all injury to others, whether through body, speech, or mind. In relation to this precept, I'll tell a short story. Long ago, in China, a bird hunter visited a famous Zen Master and said, "I live in a nearby village with my wife and three children. We are very poor. I don't know how to farm, and I have no trade. Recently I heard the Buddha's teaching, and a great desire arose in me to practice it. But I can't let my family starve. What can I do?" The Zen Master replied, "There is no need for you to change your profession. Just do this: every time you kill a bird, kill your own mind too. Practice this way and all will be well."

The second precept deals with taking things that are not given. This is more than just not stealing. It means not coveting things in the material, psychological, or in the spiritual realms. Desire stems from a feeling of incompleteness. This precept teaches us to accept ourselves wholly and to make this total acceptance is to become complete, to attain the Buddha state.

See *The Five Precepts*

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

February 2014

- **Introduction to Zen**
Monday, February 3
7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Sitting 8:00 PM – 9:00 PM

- **Intensive Practice**
Tuesday and Wednesday, February 4 & 5
7:00 – 9:00 PM

- **Buddha's Eyes Opening Ceremony**
Thursday, February 6
7:30 PM

- **Public Dharma Talk**
Friday, February 7
7:30 – 9:00 PM

- **YMJJ Retreat**
Saturday – Sunday
February 8 – 9

- **Precepts Ceremony**
Sunday, February 9
1:30 – 2:30 PM

- **Dharma Talk**
Wednesday, February 26
7:30 – 9:00 PM

March 2013

- **Introduction to Zen**
Monday, March 3
7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

- **Dharma Talk**
Wednesday, March 26
7:30 – 9:00 PM

- **Extended Practice**
Friday, March 28
7:00 – 10:00 PM

*Precepts, rules and teaching forms
are only for you - your true self
likes this very much.*

Zen Master Seung Sahn

Buddha's Eyes Opening Ceremony Thursday, February 6, 2014

To commemorate the installation of our new Buddha, we will be holding an Eye's Opening Ceremony with our guiding teacher, Zen Master Dae Kwang. The ceremony will begin at 7:30 pm at GLZC.

Public Talk with Zen Master Dae Kwang Friday, February 7, 2014

Please join us for a Dharma Talk by Dharma Teacher, Chris Rundblad, followed by Q&A with Zen Master Dae Kwang, guiding teacher of the Great Lake Zen Center. This is a free talk, open to everyone. It will start at 7:30 pm at the Great Lake Zen Center, 828 Locust St. This talk is the kick-off to our Winter YMJJ Retreat.

Winter Yong Maeng Jong Jin Retreat February 8-9, 2014

Ready to put down your opinion, your condition and your situation?

Join us on our Winter Yong Maeng Jong Jin Retreat. Enjoy this opportunity for sustained periods of mindfulness and together-action practice. The retreat will include sitting, walking, chanting, bowing meditation, along with kong-an interviews, formal meals and short work periods

Our YMJJ Retreat will be held at GLZC, 828 Locust St. It will run from 6:00 am Saturday, February 8 through 12:00 pm Sunday, February 9. After an informal lunch, the Precepts Ceremony will commence at 1:30 pm.

Zen Master Dae Kwang, the guiding teacher of our center and the Mexico City Zen Center, will be leading the retreat and conducting interviews. The price of the retreat cost varies for DT/DTT, members of Kwan Um School, and non-members. See the registration form on our website for complete details. The price includes vegetarian meals. Sleeping space can be arranged if required at no extra charge. Those needing sleeping space should notify us by email and bring a sleeping bag, pillow, washcloth, and towel. For more information, email us at info@glzc.org

Precepts Ceremony Sunday, February 9

Following our retreat, after an informal lunch, the Precepts Ceremony will be held at 1:30 pm. Friends and family are welcome and encouraged to attend the Precepts Ceremony. Help us support our new Five Preceptor and Ten Preceptor as they vow to strengthen their commitment to the Bodhisattva path.

Our Teachers Are Everywhere

Andy Yencha, DT

I'm sitting on wooden bleacher seats surrounded by at least 400 other spectators. We're inside the Swiss Turners' gymnasium, the practice center for one of Southeast Wisconsin's largest gymnastic schools. The room is warm and bright and almost every surface is covered with a thin layer of white chalk dust that comes from a powder the gymnasts use to dry their hands. It's noisy in here. The dominant background noise is the sound of countless conversations merged into a low decibel hum. Slightly louder and more discernable is the pop music piped in over a speaker system. Many folks are unconsciously tapping their toes and lip syncing the lyrics to memorable pop hits from classic bands like The Jackson Five, Led Zeppelin and The Police. The loudest sounds occur when groups of spectators, usually moms who are friends because they have boys on the same team, clap and yell to cheer a boy who performs his routine exceptionally well. These sudden outbursts grab my attention, like when someone shouts "KATZ" during a Dharma Talk, and focused it on the gym meet.

I'm here with my wife and daughter to watch my son compete. Ian is now on the floor with at least 100 other boys, ages 7-12, warming up for this regional invitational. I glance across the gym frequently to watch him. He's having fun hanging out with the two other guys on his team, eating snacks, goofing around and, for brief moments, competing. Long waits make up the bulk of a gymnastics meet for competitors and spectators alike. Today's meet started a little before noon and will last until 5:30pm. During the 6 hour we will be here, Ian's judged performances will take less than 8 minutes in total, or around 75 seconds for each of his six events: pommel, rings, vault, parallel bars, high bar and floor. His routines are exciting to watch, but leave plenty of time for my mind to wander, which is how I came to realize that gym meets and Zen practice are the same.

The floor judge raises his right arm to signal he's ready for the next competitor. Before his arm is down, a thin boy wearing shorts slightly too large steps onto the mat, turns to face the judge, and lifts his arm in an identical jester that signals he's about to begin. A split second later he sprints forward and launches headfirst into a diving tumble that shifts into a full split that, remarkably, transitions into a walking hand stand. How his thin arms contain muscle strong enough to lift his body I don't know, but before he's finished this lad, like all the competitors that came before him today, ends his floor routine with an astonishing sequence of connected flips and somersaults. To my untrained eyes, most of the boys nail their required skills on floor and all the other events. But even those that fall, or step out of bounds, find the composure to recover and finish with a smart salute to the judge. These little athletes are

personifying the "just-do-it" teaching we talk about at our Zen Center all the time. By the end of the meet they have demonstrated more than 600 times, for over 500 students, what "try-mind" is truly about. Their great effort inspires me to keep working on the challenges I face in my life and I'll venture a guess it does the same for many of the other spectators and fellow competitors in the gym as well.

Just in front of me is another teacher, my 9 year old daughter. She has no interest in watching her brother or his teammates. She wishes she were home with her toys, our television, computer and snacks. When her Mom and I dragged her to similar meets last year we packed an arsenal of books, games and tasty treats designed to keep her happy. But today she is quietly passing the time playing video games on a touch screen tablet. She does not know it yet, but in a small way, she is beginning to understand that the universe is not all about her. This wisdom is another fundamental teaching in our practice that we call, "Not for me." When I glance at her I reflect on the way I divide my time between family, work, Zen practice and personal pursuits. How's my "Not for me" practice coming?

The Lakeshore Academy team provides the final lesson this day. Near the end of the meet their coach calls them together to critique their last event. His basic message is, "Good try everyone but I think you can do better next time." The boys listened closely to their coach, but when he's done their attention returns to the present moment. They're hungry! One boy says to his teammates, "Do you want to go to Culvers?" "There are no Culvers around here" another boy answers. To which a third boy replies, "What about McDonalds?" Then they all march off in single file to their last event. Wherever they decided to eat, I'm confident they had an experience that was just like this gym meet, perfect and complete.



The third precept deals with lust, and causes more consternation to many people than any of the others. Traditionally, it meant abstinence from unlawful sexual relations such as adultery. But it also forbids any act done in lust, whether it be eating, sex, or even teaching the Dharma. As such, it points to the desireless, complete Buddha realm. Just as we are taught to respect food, and not let eating become a sensual trip, we simply need to respect sex. What that means to me, and I guess it's rather simplistic, is that sex should be based on mutual understanding and love. Mindless body groping only obscures our true nature.

The fourth precept -- no lying -- means honesty with oneself. Honesty is extremely important in our practice. To deceive others is to deceive oneself; to deceive oneself is to lose sight of the Truth. Long ago Zen Master Seong-Am used to open the window that had a view of the mountains, and looking up, he would shout, "Master!" Looking down, he said, "Yes?" "Always keep clear." "Yes!" "Do not be tricked by people!" "Yes, yes!" So to be honest with ourselves is to see ourselves as we truly are, to see everything just as it is. Like all the other precepts, this one asks us to abandon all imaginings, all attachments, and to become like a clear mirror reflecting all things without distortion.

The last precept deals with intoxicants. An intoxicant is anything that intoxicates. For us this is especially Zen and our great understanding of it, our great practice and dedication to it, and our great compassion to all sentient beings.

How do we practice the precepts? Suzuki Roshi, speaking of the precepts, once said that our way is to keep the precepts without being bound by them. A visitor once asked Soen Sa Nim about breaking the precepts. In answer, Soen Sa Nim said, "If you are in the woods and a rabbit runs by with a hunter chasing it, and the hunter asks you to point the direction the rabbit ran, what will you do? If you tell the truth, the rabbit will die. Sometimes lying is the action of a Bodhisattva. Specific actions are neither good or bad. The important point is - why? Is this action done to help others or only for some selfish motive?" I think Suzuki Roshi's and Soen Sa Nim's words are an injunction to keep the precepts effortlessly, in other words, to keep a clear mind.

According to Buddhism, good and bad are just thinking, enlightened and unenlightened are empty names. Why keep the precepts? This morning, Soen Sa Nim told us a story about Zen Master Mang Gong. Mang Gong lived in Korea during that country's occupation by the Japanese. At that time, many Japanese priests and monks went to Korea to

establish their style of Buddhism. At a conference to which thirty-one of the foremost leaders in Korean Buddhism were called, Mang Gong among them, the Japanese announced that from then on, Korean monks could marry, drink alcohol, and eat meat, as is done in Japan. Thirty of the Korean leaders were willing to obey their overlords, but Mang Gong rejected the Japanese suggestion. Quoting the Amithaba Sutra, he said, "If one person encourages a monk to break his vows, this person will go to hell." Then he continued, "There are 7,000 monks in Korea. Where will all of you go? The original is clear and empty. Why did the mountains and rivers appear? If you understand this, breaking the vows is no hindrance, if you do not understand, and break vows, you will go to hell like an arrow. What can you do?"

In practicing the precepts, we will break them many times. It is important not to give up. Breaking the precepts is like falling down when you're walking. The thing to do is to get up and start walking again, and if you fall again, get up again, keep on trying.

The precepts are to help us cut off our attachments, and when that is done, then all the precepts are kept naturally. And so I will ask you a question. Once upon a time, Zen Master Nam Cheon cut a cat in two with his knife. Was this a good or bad action? If you sit in silence, you are no better than rocks, but all speech is wrong. What can you do?

KATZ!

Your mind now is the mind that keeps all the precepts.

Thank you.



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Regular Practice Schedule of the Great Lake Zen Center

Monday and Wednesday at 7:30PM;
Saturday at 8:00AM

Other special events as described elsewhere in the newsletter. Unless otherwise noted, all events are held at the Great Lake Zen Center.

Beginners Always Welcome!

Unless noted otherwise, *Introductions to Zen* are offered on the first Monday of each month. Dharma Talks are offered on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Both are at 7:30PM.



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