

## *Selective with the World*

*May 4, 2014*

Close your eyes and watch your breath.

It's when you can close your eyes that you can pay more attention to the breath. Otherwise, you get distracted by things outside.

This is the story of our life. We get distracted by all kinds of things outside. We forget what we're really responsible for, which is our own thoughts, our own words, and our own deeds. These are important because they shape everything else we're going to experience.

But we tend to overlook them and focus on things outside. We get distracted by the pretty sights, the nice colors, the nice sounds, other people outside, what they're doing, what we want out of them. We just get pulled further and further and further away. And as a result, we lose our foundation.

So come back to your foundation. Make it a good solid place to stay. It's like coming back to a house that you've abandoned for a long time. You've got to clean it out for a bit. Breathe in a way that feels like it's cleaning out the whole body, all the way down the nerves, all the way down the different parts of the body, so that it's a refreshing place to stay. Because you've got to stay right here, not only as your solid place but also your safe place.

The windstorms of the past week taught us a good lesson. You can imagine what life would be up here if every building had a big sail. That's what they had to deal with back in the past when storms came up in the ocean. If you were in a sailboat and you didn't take your sail down, the sail would no longer be a help to you. It'd be something dangerous. You have to take down your sails and hide out inside until the storm has passed. Then you can come up and put your sails up again.

The times when the winds of change are so fast that the more you're trying to claim of the world out there, the more it's going to destroy you. So you have to have a safe place where you can come inside and say, "Okay right now is a place to hide out; right now is a time to hide out." And keep your sails down. In other words, trying to gain material gain, status, praise from other people, or gain pleasure from the world outside: Those are like having big sails up. You're hoping to catch all the good things out there but when the bad things come, you're catching the bad things as well. So you have to be very selective.

Even when the good things come, you have to be selective. When gain comes, what kind of gain is worth taking and what kind of gain is going to get you into

trouble? And once you've got it, what's the best use of it? Because you know you're not going to have it forever. Some people say to get as much pleasure out of it as you can. But then the pleasure itself doesn't last either. What does last is the karma. So what good karma can you develop from the gain that you've got?

The same when you gain status: You suddenly have new powers that you didn't have before as you rise higher and higher in your life. But what are you going to do with those heightened powers? You can do a lot more good or you can do a lot more evil. You know you're not going to have them forever, so you've got to learn how to use them for a good purpose so that you'll be safe when they leave you.

The same with praise. People praise you and it's so easy to say, "Oh, I must be good enough." You've got to remember the reason they're praising you is because they want you to stay being good, or even get better. But then again there are some times when they praise you because they want something out of you.

So you've got to be careful even with the good things. They have their dangers.

There are a lot of pleasures out there that are bad for the mind; there are a lot of pleasures that are good for the mind. Learn how to choose the ones that are right.

As for loss, sometimes loss can be good for you. It teaches you important lessons, like how to live frugally. You can learn how little you can get by on and still be happy. At the same time, you learn who your true friends are.

The same with loss of status: Your true friends still come looking for you even when you don't have the status you had before.

The same with criticism: Sometimes that has a good purpose. It teaches you things that you should change in yourself that other people may normally not be in a mood to tell you about. But if someone does tell you and you look at yourself in all fairness and you realize they're right, you've gained an important lesson. As the Buddha said, someone who criticizes you with wisdom is pointing out a treasure to you: the areas where you can improve your life.

So with the good and the bad things, it's important that you be selective, and that you know how to take down your sails when the changes of the world get so fast that good and bad will just drive you into the wall.

That's what we're trying to develop right here: a safe place to hide out when the winds of change are blowing too fast or in a destructive direction. You know how to hide out and find a sense of secure well-being right here. That's an important safe place to have.