

## *Respect for True Happiness*

*April 1, 2017*

Close your eyes and watch your breath. As the breath comes in, watch it coming in. As it goes out, watch it going out.

Show some respect for the meditation. In other words, give it your full attention. You may have noticed that we do a lot of bowing down around here. We bow down to the Buddha because we respect him, and we respect him because he teaches us to respect something worthy of respect in ourselves: the desire for true happiness, a happiness that doesn't harm anybody.

That's a desire that the world tends to run roughshod over. They try to tell us to be content with this, that or the other thing that they can sell us, and not to focus on anything better than that. So people end up doing a lot of things that are harmful for one another in the search for that kind of happiness.

But the Buddha said there is a kind of happiness that's possible that doesn't harm anybody. And it's a true happiness. It goes deeper than any other happiness can do. That's why we respect him: He's teaching us to respect ourselves.

So show some respect for your mind. Bring it right here in the present moment. As for other things that would pull you away, you let them go for the time being. You want to have a sense of priorities. You have to decide what *you* want in life, not what the world has been telling you. And you can ask yourself, "What would be the best thing to do with your lifetime?"

The Buddha's decision was to find a happiness, as I said, that doesn't harm anybody, a happiness that doesn't change. People discouraged him, saying it wasn't possible. But he said, "Well, my life wouldn't have any meaning unless I at least give it a try." So after many years of trying different ways, he finally found the way. Then he taught it for forty-five years. For free. He didn't ask anything from anybody except simply that they would give his teaching a true chance, a true test.

Many people found that it worked and they've been spreading it down from generation to generation ever since then. So here we are, the beneficiaries of all this long lineage of people who've found that the Buddha's teachings work. So we should put them to use for ourselves. After all, that's what the Buddha's purpose was. He didn't do this so that people would bow down to him. He did this so that people would actually take his teachings and show respect for the teachings by testing them. And if they found they were good, then they could pass them on. When you actually put them into practice, not only do you benefit but you provide a good example for other people. That's how it gets passed on, as long as people realize that it's something of value. If you just pass down the words but nobody puts them into practice, then they just become words after a while.

But here's the practice for getting your mind under control so that it doesn't destroy your happiness and so it actually does find a happiness that's harmless. And in the course of developing that happiness, you develop honorable qualities: wisdom, compassion, purity in your actions. All this is good. And whether the world says it's good or not, that's the world. You have to decide if this is what you want for yourself. If you want to maintain your own goodness, maintain the value of your own mind, and show respect for yourself, then you might want to look into this, to see if it really is true what the Buddha said: that a harmless happiness, a true happiness, an unchanging happiness is possible through your own efforts.

Which means that you have to test it in your own efforts. But it's a good test. The things the Buddha asks you to do in order to find that happiness are all good things. He wants you to be generous, to be virtuous, to get your mind under control. These are all honorable activities.

So show respect for yourself, show respect for your desire for true happiness, a harmless happiness, and you'll see how far that respect can take you. As Ajaan Fuang used to say, respect is a sign of intelligence—if you respect the right things, respect the right people. So learn how to show proper respect.