

## *Happiness Worthy of Respect*

*July 11, 2018*

Close your eyes and watch your breath. Try to bring your mind to the breath and try to keep it there.

We're looking for something good in the mind. The first step is to get the mind here in the present moment so that we can watch it to see what's really going on inside. And why do we watch it? Because we want to know what we can do to find true happiness: a happiness that doesn't change, a happiness that doesn't harm anybody. In Ajaan Lee's terminology, we bow down to that desire.

You notice that we do a lot of bowing around here. It's because the Buddha teaches us to respect something in ourselves that's worthy of respect: our desire for true happiness that's harmless, a happiness that doesn't change. In other words, it doesn't harm you, it doesn't harm anybody else.

We're all here looking for happiness. Desire is what brought us here to be born in this world. And what do we desire? We desire well-being, we desire happiness, however you want to translate the Pali word *sukha*. Yet all too often we look for it in ways that are not honorable, and then we begin to wonder, "Is our desire for happiness a good thing or a bad thing? Is true happiness really possible?" The Buddha's saying, Yes, it is possible, and it is a good thing if you do it right.

So bow down to your desire for true happiness. That means putting an effort into whatever will lead to that happiness, because it's a worthwhile effort. The Buddha saw from his own example that it can be found through human effort, and he set out the path for how it's done. Not simply for us to remind ourselves that this is what we really do want in life but also to give us the motivation to focus on doing the steps: Whatever the practice demands, we're willing to do that.

There's that Zen saying that the Great Way is not difficult for those with no preferences. Now, that doesn't mean you don't prefer happiness over suffering. You do prefer happiness. What it's referring to is that whatever the path requires, whatever the way requires, you're willing to do it. You don't say, "Well, I want to follow a way that's more comfortable, or more pleasant. or more..." whatever. Whatever's required, you're happy to do it.

You realize that not only is the happiness itself harmless, but the path leading there is also harmless. It involves generosity—generosity with your wealth, generosity with your time, generosity with your forgiveness—so it's not a selfish path.

Look around at the ways people try to find happiness in the world. So often they do create divisions, they do create suffering, both for the people looking for the happiness and for the

people around them. But here's a path to happiness that doesn't harm anybody at all, so it's a path worthy of respect.

So respect your desire for true happiness, and respect your willingness to do what it takes. As the Buddha said, people who live in the world without anything to respect live in misery. Nothing inspires them, nothing gives them any reason to keep on going. But when you know what to respect, choose wisely what to respect, then the simple fact of respect brings some happiness. If you respect the right things, then it brings even more.

So respect the desire for true happiness. Respect the Buddha for having found the path and for having told you that, Yes, you can do it, too. That's something really worth bowing down to.