

September, 2014

Greetings!!

The summer here in Seattle has moved along quite well. The group at the community center has been on a break; we will start again in the middle of September. There continues to be a nice turnout at the Detention Center, where we have group meetings twice a week now. The weekly group and the neighbors group are small, but very sincere. This summer we also had a very nice family get together (5 children and 5 adults). Everyone really enjoyed it and it is something I believe we all look forward to.

In this e-mail, there are a few things that I would like to talk about. The first is the all-inclusiveness of the training. It is open to anyone who wants to do it. You don't have to be a Buddhist. Within the various groups that we have in Seattle and those on the e-mail list are people of many different faiths and backgrounds. We also have atheists and agnostics who are doing the meditation and practice. Again, this training is open to everyone, excluding no one.

What I tell people is to do the training sincerely, to be open minded and open hearted. Also be willing to work on forgiveness - open your heart to forgive anybody and anything all the time. That seems like a lot to ask for, but what that can do for you is truly life changing. Also be open to change. Within the meditation, thoughts and ideas may come up that you may want to work on outside the meditation. This is another aspect of the training that you might find helpful.

The next thing I would like to express is the importance of having a formal meditation practice, even if it is only for a few minutes a day. There are people in the groups and on the e-mail list that I know, for one reason or another, have difficulty doing formal meditation, but want to keep up their spiritual practice. The advice I give them is to try to find time each day to be quiet and still. You could take a walk and enjoy the scenery, not letting your mind wander, just be present in the moment. Or sit and have a cup of coffee or tea, with no distractions and be very quiet and still. Like formal meditation, these things can be helpful in allowing that deeper place of the eternal to manifest itself, no matter what is going on in our daily lives. It is a place of pure and unconditional love and acceptance that is a true and ever present refuge.

The last thing I want to talk about is mindfulness. There are several aspects of mindfulness. The one that most of us are familiar with is to pay close attention to whatever you are doing and not let your mind wander. This is important in the training, to be mindful of what you do and say, without allowing random thoughts and daydreams to interfere. The next aspect of mindfulness is one that brings us to a deeper level of spirituality. This is to be mindful that everybody and everything has the true nature of the eternal. When we live with this awareness, it helps move us in the direction

of peace with ourselves and everything around us. This is difficult and is something I continually have to work on. It isn't easy to see the nature of the eternal in people who treat others unmercifully or unjustly. For me, instead of thinking that they don't have the flow of the eternal, I can see that they have closed the door to the flow with their delusions, anger, and hate. Instead of getting angry, opening our hearts, offering the love of the eternal is the best thing that we can do.

This leads me to one more spiritual aspect of mindfulness that we can work on. That is to be mindful of thoughts and feelings that come up totally unexpectedly, usually from the past, that abruptly pulls us out of our meditation. I will give an example of something that I have been working on and am still working on. I would get these waves of fear and terror, and had no idea where these feelings were coming from. When I was younger, these feelings were so debilitating that I would have to be alone, being with others was too painful. As I got older I turned to painkillers to deal with these feelings, but that just made it worse. When I would give in to these feelings, I would get paranoid, mistrusting, and just couldn't function. During the beginning of my training, as I was made more aware of when these emotions would arise, I knew I had to do something. With the help of meditation and daily training, I was able to not go along with these emotions, and allow these feelings from the past be washed by the love of the eternal. I have now realized that this is exactly what these kinds of feelings are seeking - the pure and unconditional love of the eternal.

I know that these last two aspects of mindfulness can be very difficult, to see the eternal in those things that push our buttons, and to sit still with painful feelings and let them be met by the pure love of the eternal.

These are two areas in my spiritual training that have really helped me, and I know from speaking to others that they have really helped them also.

Take care

With all my heart

Rev. Basil