

## Dharmette: Being Ready

**Gil Fronsdal**

**February 19, 2025**

**Keywords:** path, wisdom, meditation, Zen Mind Beginner's Mind, Suzuki-Roshi, preparation, presence, non-reactivity, clarity, care

---

So, for better or for worse, our tradition of Buddhism practice has the idea that the practice unfolds as a journey, unfolds as a path. And there are places where they teach a kind of Buddhism that has no path, which is very profound. I practiced in that tradition and it was very beneficial for me. But for better or worse, we have the city of a path. And sometimes there's benefits to that because then you have a path that prepares you for what's coming. And sometimes it's important to prepare ourselves for whatever comes in our life.

And what this path that is in some way or other or where it's going... is to become a person who's wise, to have wisdom. So to be wise about how to live in this world, how to speak when you speak with people, how do you, wise about what you do with your day and your activities and how you interact and wise about how you read the newspaper. I don't know if anybody reads newspapers anymore, but reads the news, that we're cultivating wisdom. And wisdom is something that comes as a consequence of being on a path. And what that suggests is that sometimes we're not ready. Sometimes we don't have the wisdom to know what to do.

Sometimes we don't have the presence of mind. We don't have the capacity for a deeper wisdom that comes from some place in the heart or someplace deep within that gives us a reliable reference point for how to live and how to respond and how to react to the world. So, sometimes that path, that journey, takes five minutes. Sometimes it takes a 45-minute period of meditation. Sometimes it takes a day. Sometimes it takes a week. Sometimes it takes a year, lifetime, depending on the circumstance.

And... I've been in the situation where I knew I had to have a very difficult phone call, and I wanted to make sure that I could do that wisely. And so I would meditate for 10 minutes before I had the phone call. And that prepared me for the phone call. That prepared me to be wiser, more balanced, less reactive, more able to take in the information and the conversation in myself. And so that was a journey. That was a 10-minute path to prepare myself.

Sometimes it takes longer. Sometimes we don't know what the challenge we're going to have.

I think it was Suzuki-Roshi in his book, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, which I read many years ago. Many of it made a big impact on me. And there was one thing he said was that the practice of Zen is preparing ourselves for when things get challenging. Right. And eventually they'll get challenging one way or the other. And so we're prepared. But to practice only when things are challenging, then you're not really ready for it yet. And that's kind of too late, maybe even if it's certain kind of challenges.

So to practice regularly, realizing it's a path of preparation partly, and to be wise. Right. And that wisdom then applies to all kinds of things in life. It applies to meditation itself. How do you meditate wisely? How do you prepare yourself for meditations? So you practice wisely.

And one of them is to know yourself well enough that you don't sit down to meditate to use the meditation as one more thing to be critical of yourself. One more thing to hold yourself at some high standard that, you know, I have to enter some really high, deep attainment or otherwise it doesn't really count. But to have the wisdom to know that meditation is not about attainment, but about learning how to be calmly present for our experience so that we can learn and understand and see and relate to it in a wise way. So we prepare ourselves with those reminders. Oh, we're here. Not for attainment. We're here just to really be present for this experience so that I learn what it's like to be present without reacting. And that prepares us for meditation. It also prepares us for life.

Because as we learned in meditation not to react, not to get caught in thoughts, not to be judgmental, not to be critical, we learn to put those down. Then we learn how to do that for everyday life. We learn how to do it for the global life that we live in. We learn, eventually, the wisdom of not making the situation worse. We learn the wisdom of staying in touch, right? With clarity, staying in touch with calm, staying in touch with some inner goodness that we have.

So many people now are quite concerned with what's happening in the world, a wider world. In some ways, it's more active now than it's been for quite a while. And one response to it is to do something about it, fix the problem. And maybe there's some very particular way that you can do something. I don't know what it would be, but maybe you have some role in your life to do something. Maybe it's writing a letter or talking to something. But for most of us who don't have anything clear and obvious to do, maybe we're preparing ourselves for something. Maybe the practice is putting ourselves on the journey, a path to being ready for what might be coming. And that's a very powerful and significant thing to do.

So that whatever comes our way, we don't know what's going to happen for you personally, individually, locally, and your community here. The San Andreas Fault can decide to show us that it exists any moment being here on the peninsula. And then what's happening in the nation as a whole becomes kind of like not really relevant. But relevant is how do we have, we were ready for that, to address that and meet that situation and what our community needs. So to be prepared. So it's either doing something when the time is right, and the rest of that time practice is preparing, developing the wisdom, developing the capacity, developing the ability to be free, to be loving, to be caring, to be wise, so that how we meet the next thing that we're going to meet. We're ready for that. Thank you.

And who knows? The next thing you might meet is someone on the sidewalk who needs some help. Maybe they need directions. Maybe they need directions to the hospital. And so you're there, ready to help them. Who knows what the world's going to ask of you? But this practice is a preparation to be able to respond to the world with our wisdom and our care and our love. And that that counts for a lot. So those are my thoughts as we are on this journey together. May we learn how to be wise together.

And we never think that we have finished that task. It's always more to learn. There's always learning more about ourselves, the world. May we respond to the world with care. So thank you. Oh, I have, before, Kevin's going to do the asking for volunteers.