

Dharmette: The Middle Way

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Oh, sometimes we live our life between two choices, between what some people call a duality perhaps, and we feel like we have to choose one or the other. So sometimes in meditation people think it's about being inward, all inside, close your eyes, and just be completely inward. And we don't want anything to do with the world, and we shouldn't have too many trucks and noise and motorcycles going up and down our street, because that's just a distraction from the real work, which is inward. So there's a distinction: inward and outward. Sometimes there's the idea that the distinction is between wanting something and not wanting something, leaning forward or leaning back. So there's a whole slew of these things.

And one interesting orientation that Buddhism has around this is the idea of the *Middle Way*. So rather than choosing one or the other, can you stand in the middle between them? And what's that like? So, for example, rather than being for something or against something, what about just standing and being present for something, just present? You don't have to be for or against. You can be for and against, but you're not involved in that, you're not feeding it, you're not engaging in it, you're not picking it up. You're just, oh, the *Middle Way*, I'll just be present.

Inward, outward. You leave IMC and, you know, that was great, I felt so connected inside, it was so nice to be cozy in my own little heart, and fantastic. And then you go out on Highway 101. And you're like, oh no, it's too much. Keep these people away. And, you know, I need to somehow, I don't know what. It's all about resistance. But remember, the *Middle Way*. Oh, what's the *Middle Way*? Not internal, not external. Just presence for all of this.

I don't know if that's the right thing when you're driving to say, but what's the *Middle Way* here? So whenever you have this question, is it A or B? Is it this or that? In Buddhism, you might answer the question, or consider the answer, what's the middle? What's the middle

that stands between them both, that doesn't involve changing it, choosing? And one of the very important aspects of why this works is, one way or the other, the middle means being aware, being attentive, and being present for what's here, okay? I don't have to choose, but I can be present.

And how do I be present? Inwardly or outwardly? Let's not choose. Let's just be present in the middle of those, where maybe my attention is open to both. So the question is, what's the *Middle Way*? What's the *Middle Way*, rather than choosing right or wrong? What's the *Middle Way*?

So if you have an argument with someone, a difficult challenge with someone, you feel like you're right and they're wrong, there you go. Is there a *Middle Way*? And just asking yourself that question, maybe you orient yourself to the argument, the conflict, very differently. Oh, maybe there's something different than just being right or being wrong. Maybe it's something different than getting my way or giving in to them. What would that be?

And Buddhism says maybe the *Middle Way* has to do with being present. And so what happens if I am present for this situation for a few moments? Maybe I can do it for 10 seconds, without being for or against, without insisting that I'm right or wrong. How do I take this in? What do I experience there then? Oh, who would have guessed? My friend is suffering too. I thought they were just angry. But they're suffering too.

Oh, well, they're suffering. I'm suffering too. Maybe there's more important things to do than be right or wrong. What happens if we just kind of go for a walk and just share a little bit that this is hard, that we have this relationship, we're friends, and this is hard that we ended up this way? Let's not solve it right now. Let's just commiserate that it's hard to be present for this.

So it's quite a significant reference point, I think, this little slogan, what's the *Middle Way*? What's the *Middle Way* here? Rather than being for and against, rather than being right and wrong, rather than being me or you, rather than being inside or outside, rather than being this way or that way. And humans are so quick to be this way or that way, or to settle down, there's a right way and wrong way, or this is how it should be and this is how it shouldn't be. And sometimes that's right, and sometimes that's wrong. But to be, what's the *Middle Way*? What's the *Middle Way*? Is there a *Middle Way* here?

And *Middle Way* doesn't mean compromise. *Middle Way* doesn't mean the limp way, that, you know, this is where nothing happens, where you all get limp and don't do anything. The *Middle Way* should be dynamic. You know, what's the *Middle Way* here? Maybe there's a third

solution. Maybe there's a whole new thing that can happen by standing in the middle of it all. And maybe there'll be a third solution.

Maybe it's not right or wrong. Maybe both of us turned out to be wrong. Yeah. Maybe both of us are right, but there's a third right, which is even better for both of us. So what's the *Middle Way*? It's the door that opens up.

And to finally say something about this *Middle Way* in Buddhism, there's a lot of emphasis on the *Middle Way* in Buddhism. And my way of seeing it for years was the middle of a seesaw. And I used to love, as a kid, standing in the middle and balancing between the two sides and keeping it flat. You know, that was kind of fun. But I thought, oh, that's the middle. You know, the middle is always the middle of a line.

Until one day I realized, probably in ancient India, the reference of middle, because Buddhism talks about a path, it's the path in the middle of the forest. And in ancient India, kind of metaphors, the jungle, the thicket of jungles, is the thicket of attachments and thickets of opinions that we have. And there's a *Middle Way*, there's a clearing in the forest where there's a path that's unobstructed. So what's the *Middle Way* that has no attachment in it? What's the *Middle Way* that allows us to go forward breathing easily, being at ease with our breath, being at ease with our belly? What's the *Middle Way* here, where the jungle opens?

So that's also in this idea of the *Middle Way*. It's the middle in the jungle. There's a path, and the path means a clearing that you can walk unobstructedly. So hopefully this simple notion of the *Middle Way* is evocative for you, and you'll discover all new applications, new ideas, what the *Middle Way* opens for you. Not just what I said today here. Good. So thank you.