

Dharmette: Right Speech (3 of 5) Disposed to Goodwill.

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So, continuing with the five things to consider before you speak, to know how to speak or if you should speak: Is it true? Is it useful or beneficial, what you're going to say today? Is there goodwill in what you're going to say—well-wishing? And tomorrow, it has to do with the impact of the words. What kind of impact will this have? And the last will be: Is it timely? Is it the right time to say it?

So it is audit, accurate, useful, disposition we have, impact, and timeliness. Today, it's goodwill. Is there a disposition of kindness? What's the disposition we have when we're speaking? Just checking in that way—what's the attitude we have? It can be revealing. It can support us to be careful in what we say.

So, if we're annoyed, if we're grumpy, if we're feeling somehow kind of imbalanced or out of shape, to know that and then maybe be careful that we don't say the first things that come to our mind. Maybe hold back from speaking until we're really sure it's the right thing to say. We don't want to spread our annoyance, our complaining, our ill will. We don't want to spread our conceit, our arrogance, into the world. So you want to check in with ourselves: What's my disposition?

And in the Buddha's teachings of this audit we're doing, the question he has is: Will I speak from goodwill? Is there goodwill? Is there *mettā*? And I like to use the word goodwill rather than loving-kindness, because having love in the word loving-kindness maybe sets the bar pretty high. You can maybe have goodwill for anybody and everyone, but many of them maybe you won't love. Maybe you're not ready to love certain people.

But if you have the occasion to meet them at a time when they're challenged, they've just fallen and gotten injured, maybe you would step down to help them and support them. You have goodwill for them and bring them some water. Call, you know, a doctor or something.

But to have goodwill for everyone that you encounter, knowing that you don't have to love everyone: a basic friendliness, a basic willingness to see them with kind eyes, with supportive eyes.

And one of the motivations for this goodwill is to also understand this is good for you. It's good for ourselves to have goodwill. Not to have goodwill is to close something down, to be stressing the heart, the mind. Ill will is stressful. Ill will is not good for us. It's a little bit of, you know, bad medicine for us that we take.

And so, to be careful what we do for our own sake. And goodwill is kind of the standard. If there's no basic friendliness in what we're going to do, probably we're harming ourselves. And if we're not harming ourselves, if we're comfortable with ourselves, know how to touch into that deeper place inside—the deep mind, the deep heart—underneath the surface mind, the reactive mind, the mind that's caught up in the stories and the desires and the confusions of life.

That's what the meditation is to do: to get in touch with this deeper place inside and to know it, so that we can reflect: Am I speaking with goodwill? And if not, maybe consider not saying what you have to say. I can't tell you whether you should or shouldn't in the circumstance, but there's all kinds of context for speech. But maybe be very careful. Maybe consider not speaking if you don't have some basic goodwill. Maybe wait.

Maybe it's a matter of waiting ten seconds, maybe a minute. One of the things I've found is that sometimes there's a compulsion to speak. Like, it feels like this has to be said. The idea that not saying it, I know, just violates some kind of strong energy of purpose, of need, or something. And I find that it's usually not very helpful to speak from that place.

And so, to wait, to pause, to see if something else comes up. Maybe eventually you have to say this thing that has to be said, but maybe it doesn't have to be said under the pressure of an inner compulsion. So, to check in: What's going on here? And then to speak words which are gifts. Can your words be a gift for people? Can your words be good medicine for people?

Can your words be expressions of kindness, expressions of somehow appreciating a person? Can your words be words that take the other person's situation into account and not make their day more difficult? Maybe give them a better day. Be words that are supportive. So these are all kind of attitudes of basic goodwill. And can you speak with goodwill?

And this is, I think, the goodwill is one of the most important social attitudes the Buddha taught. And I think because it sits at the interface, as a disposition, as an attitude, between

something deep within ourselves and something about our connection to others, so that we're meeting people from some fullness, some depth, something that's really intimate and important for us personally. Not from the reactive mind, not from the story-making mind that's making things up and judging and evaluating, and not the anxious mind, and not the conceited mind, not the hateful mind, not the annoyed mind.

But what is it? What would be the best for ourselves? What's most deep down underneath the reactive mind? What is best for us to come from? What do we want to grow? What do we want to emphasize in ourselves for our own well-being, our own health, for our own walking the *Dharma* path?

And it turns out that that meeting place, that place, has something to do with goodwill. Goodwill sits there at a very significant place—the interface of self and others, the deep mind, the deep heart, and what's really best for others. And then the goodwill for others is also—it's kind of a big circle. Because if you have genuine goodwill for others, I mean, really have a sense of what's good for them, not just give them a third donut just because you feel you want to be friendly, that might not be good for them.

But if you have their best wishes, the best, the best, the best in mind for the person, not only is it good for you, but it's good for them. And their words then become a gift, a gift for yourself, a gift for others, a gift for this world. So, am I speaking from some basic, simple form of goodwill? Or some kind of being attuned to where it's healthiest for me to come from, what feels like most placed integrity, the place where I feel most where I want to be, the place where I most want to be at home in myself?

And the place I would be if I was caring for a young baby or a relative on their deathbed and I'm holding their hand. What is the place you have that is the place of love, the place of kindness, goodwill? And can you imagine that in the other person? Can you imagine that they have a depth? They're not only what they're presenting, only the words they're saying.

They too have a deep place inside that they would call upon at these crucial times in their life when they're going to care for someone else—a baby or a dying relative, or a child that's gotten injured, or a neighbor that's maybe quite sick. So, to speak words of goodwill. So, to have this as a reference point: Am I speaking with goodwill? What's my disposition? And see what comes back. See what you learn about yourself in that process, and that might change how you speak, what you say.

And you might also then turn that around and say to yourself, “Are my thoughts, my thinking thoughts, of goodwill for myself? Or are the way I think about myself ill will in some way? Are

they not healthy for me? Are they unhealthy, these thoughts that I'm having?" And if they are, question them. Question whether it's really necessary.

Each person, including you, is invaluable and worthy of care, of love, of attention. To support people, yourself, for the best in you to come out. And so, what I'm teaching in meditation this week of really learning how to use your thinking mind to help bring out the best of you in meditation is something that maybe you can do using your regular life as well. With that question: Am I thinking with goodwill? Am I speaking with goodwill?

And if not, be careful, be considerate, and give a second thought to what you're about to say. So thank you. And so, you might today make this a kind of a very central theme quietly. No one has to know. Exploring this notion of goodwill: Are you speaking from goodwill?

And maybe it's too high a bar to try to then speak thoughts of good words of goodwill. But at least ask yourself that question and see what happens. May each of you touch into what's nourishing in you through this question about goodwill. Thank you.