

Settle Down and See Yourself

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Good morning everyone! Christmas is coming. This time of the year, people are probably shopping, or preparing for the big family gathering, or spending time with children, or on the way to visit parents, friends, or on vacation somewhere warm. We are still here. This time last year, we were on the trip to east of US. We drove our cars. Our Christmas time was partially in New York. We traveled to the north and drove in the snow. We stayed in the mountain hotel and it snowed hard that evening. We also went down to play on the ice of a lake. It was very cold.

Life is a dream, and you may often have this feeling. This world is a dream and we are in this dream. In the morning I leave to work, and in the evening I come back. Often I feel I live in two worlds. And sometimes, after a day of work, I feel like having been outside for quite a long time. This feeling has been with me since I was a child. After like 20 mins of nap, I felt like I had been out of this world for long time and then came back again. I am not sure what kind feeling this is. It's a feeling that time is not real and it can be shortened, elongated or curved, which means that the ticking of the clock could be either slow or fast.

Chinese and English are two very different languages. China and US have very different cultures. But still there are many similarities because we are all human beings living in the same world. And we have accumulated many kinds of similar wisdom from life.

The topic that I am going to talk about today is to “settle down and see yourself.”

In this modern life, everyone seems busy including children. Children are busy with

their school life and parents are busy with their work and taking care of their children. In Chinese, “busy” is “忙”(mang). If we separate the word, it is “心亡”(xin wang), which means that the heart dies if one gets too busy. Based on this, when people are too busy with the outside world, their heart is actually in dead state. They are like the walking dead.

In English, there are many words that are well used and in high frequency. One of them is “engage”. People often say, “Engage in the conversation.” They say this when someone is not listening in a conversation. Or they say, “Engage in your work.” Or they say, “I am engaged to somebody.” But you will not hear people say this, “Engage in yourself.” And this is what I am going to talk about today, “Engage in yourself or engage yourself to yourself.” To me, to “engage” means to put your heart on something or somebody. And I would like you to engage yourself to yourself, to settle down and see yourself. Do you really know who you are? Do you really know why you are here? Do you really know where you came from? Do you really know who you were before you were born? Do you really know the meaning of life? How much do you know the universe? Do you really know the truth behind? Do you really know yourself?

We all have read stories of Bodhidharma, the master of Zen. There are some famous stories about Bodhidharma, for example, “crossing the river with one reed”, “facing the wall for nine years”, “cutting the arm and standing in the snow” and “returning to the west with one shoe.” But today the story that I am going to mention is none of these.

When Bodhidharma arrived in china, he went to Donglin temple first with bare feet. The high monk there asked him, “Master spared no efforts to come to China to propagate Dharma, and this is really the blessing of our Eastern land.” He then asked, “Where are your servants?” Bodhidharma answered, “They did not come.” The high

monk then asked, "Where are all the sutras?" Bodhidharma answered, "I did not bring them." The high monk then said, "Master is proficient in Buddha Dharma, the Dharma must be in Master's mind. Please give us Dharma talks." Bodhidharma walked to the lectern and sat there with all the monks standing in front of him for long time and did not say a word. Everyone was confused. Because of what happened, some monks looked down on Bodhidharma. One day, Bodhidharma was sitting under a tree with eyes closed. A crowd of monks passed by and saw Bodhidharma sitting there. The lead monk said to others, "Let me tell you, in the mud grows the lotus. You can only learn the purity from lotus, but not the filth from the mud." Other monks agreed and appraised him. At this moment, Bodhidharma opened his mouth, "With the Dharma unchanged, change with the conditions; change with the conditions with the Dharma unchanged. If the mud can nurture the lotus, then the mud is good mud." Other monks then wondered, "Mud is good mud?" The lead monk then said back, "According to what you said, isn't it that everything is not certain? There is good in the bad and there is bad in the good. How could it be?" Bodhidharma then said, "There is no good or bad. Good or bad depends on the person." One little monk nodded, "Yes, it makes sense." The lead monk raised his fist and wanted to hit the little monk. Bodhidharma then said to him, "Is it that your hand makes the fist? Or the fist makes your hand?" Everyone was confused, "This is the question of whether there was egg first or chicken first." The lead monk looked down at Bodhidharma and said, "After all is said, it's still not clear." Bodhidharma then said, " You'd better look for somebody who can make you clear." The lead monk snorted and said, "I think the person you are talking about is YOU." Bodhidharma answered back quickly, "Not me. It is YOURSELF."

"Not me. It is yourself." Yes, you all need to look for one person and this person is yourself. Who am I? The truth is that most people have lost themselves.

They engage in family; they engage in work; they engage in children. These three aspects have taken most of their time. They cook; they travel; maybe they spend some time on reading too. All they do is busy with the people and things around them. Rarely do they have time for themselves. It's not that everybody is numb enough and feel nothing. There are people who feel the constraints they have, but they are just not clear what's the problem.

Many people, after work, before they enter their home to face the family, they prefer to stay in the car for a while, just themselves. I knew one person who would rather sleep in his truck at night, not in his home on the Simmons mattress. When he told me that, I said to him, "I understand your feeling." I often see many people in their cars by the lake, sitting there and do thing. They enjoy the moment of being with themselves.

When I watched the movie WALL-E, I just wondered, "What is the meaning of life?" Are those people really happy when they can get whatever they want and do nothing in the spaceship? They eat whatever they want; they drink whatever they like; they play like no brain children; they enjoy love when they have the thought; they are transferred in the rolling chair; they don't have to walk. Actually they cannot walk because their big body does not let them walk, even move. What are they? Why do they live? Isn't that sad to watch the movie? They are indulged in the material world and totally forget themselves. They seem energetic outside, but what about inside? Body is just a container for the soul to experience the world, not for the body to enjoy the world.

How many children lost themselves in games? How many people are lost in their families? How many people are obsessed by their work? How many people cannot resist the over sweet, over yummy food? How many people are injecting drugs to themselves? In US, many cities are filled with people addicted to drugs and dying.

Just in Los Angeles, every day, there are over 50,000 homeless people and 40% of them live with drugs or are mentally ill.

Settle down and see yourself. Settle down and see the self. Settle down and engage in yourself. Settle down and sit with your soul. Settle down and just be with yourself.

The self is no birth or death, no increase or decrease, no filth or pure. The self needs no sweet and yummy food; the self needs no cigarettes; the self needs no wine to cloudy the mind; the self needs no gambling; the self needs no drugs to numb itself; the self needs no worldly love for pleasure; the self needs no games; the self needs no big house; the self needs no luxury car; the self needs no wealth to spend; the self needs no fame to enjoy.

What does the self need? The self needs to be free from all the attachments from the world. All the attachments wrap the self up so that it cannot breath. The self needs to experience, to learn, to understand and to explore the world freely; the self needs to know the truth of the world; the self needs wisdom and enlightenment; the self needs to continue increase its energy; the self needs to keep purifying itself to rise to higher level of the universe.

What the self wants to do often is opposite of what the mind wants to do. The mind is full of desires and the true self has no desires.

So, settle down and see yourself. Spare some time every day for yourself. Either sit or walk, just you and yourself, no family, no work, no wife or husband, no parents, no children. Quietly and peacefully, emerge yourself into your surroundings; emerge yourself into the nature; emerge yourself into the sunlight; emerge yourself into the universe. Feel the freedom inside.

Often, you will have unhappy feelings, or are worried about something. When this happens, sit or walk alone and quietly. When a cup of muddy water settles down, the water would be clear. It's the same with people. When our mind is desultory, wisdom will fly to the winds. Sitting with the body still helps settle down the mind. Everyone has wisdom. Everyone is equipped with wisdom. All you need to do is to settle down the mind and the heart, and the wisdom will rise spontaneously.

In the universe, the strength of heart is the greatest. While quietness can reach the heart and get the strength from it. Do you see the seeds sprout in darkness and in quietness? You may have felt that night and day have different energy. If not, try to walk or drive outside at night. Everything is quiet at night. And according to research, most plants grow faster during the night.

Settle down; enjoy the quietness; reach the heart and connect to the universe. Everything is connected. So do you and the rest of the world. Free yourself from the small world and put yourself in a bigger picture.

Settle down and see yourself. Explore the world inside. Learn to be with yourself. Of course, I am not saying to separate yourself completely from your family, your work, your loved ones. I am just saying that you leave some time to yourself. Connect with yourself; engage in yourself; be with yourself. It's a different world. It's your world. You are the center of the universe. You are a planet and rotate yourself well, then everybody and everything around you would only be better. Completely relax yourself in your own world and enjoy!

Thank you for listening!