Precepts: The Practice of Kindness

Carol Wilson · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Carol Wilson · 50:14

I'm having a lot of trouble realizing that this is actually happening, this three-month course. It just feels like another day so far. It hasn't quite sunk in, the enormity of what we're all doing here together. I don't know if it's sunk into you yet. You're a little closer to it now, but not yet. You're still talking and having a good time. You have a nice sit, and it seems so pleasant. And then you go off and play again. But here we are, and it's a wonderful thing.

I want to elaborate a bit tonight on the subject of the precepts, conscious conduct, morality—the term in Pali is *sīla*, the term that we usually use. Let me just preface this by saying all five of us will be taking turns every night giving talks, and so you're going to hear five quite different ways of expressing the Dharma and our understanding of it and the way it comes out. And then you'll be hearing it in a hundred unique different ways of what that actually means and how it connects to your own experience. They're all quite unique. They're all a different piece of the mandala that is this expression of truth, of Dharma.

I just put that out to say: enjoy the differences, enjoy each piece of the puzzle, and if something doesn't fit for you, let it go. Don't get into a lot of time analyzing how something I said isn't quite the same as something Steve said, wondering who is right and who is wrong, when you actually think it's a third way altogether. You'll make yourself crazy, and it doesn't really accomplish anything, since analysis never gets us anywhere in this practice. Enjoy the dance, the manifestation, and if something seems like it doesn't work for you or doesn't make sense, let it go and just be here for the next thing.

The Dalai Lama has said at times that his true religion is kindness. That really strikes a profound note with me because it is seemingly, on the surface, so simple and maybe almost naive. But for me, when I really explore the aspect of our meditation practice, the aspect of working with conscious conduct, I find that to be a very profound way of expressing the truth of how we relate to life, to ourselves, to other beings.

As Joseph mentioned last night, we cultivate our meditation practice—the formal sitting and walking, the mindfulness from moment to moment—from a foundation of loving-kindness. We're cultivating through the mindful attention clarity, clear seeing of things just as they are, but this clear seeing is imbued with loving-kindness, with open-hearted connection with ourselves, with whatever experience is arising, and with a deep-seated acceptance of ourselves and of whatever experience is arising. Loving-kindness is an attitude that is really hand in hand with our Vipassana practice.

Kindness to others, kindness to the environment. Working with conscious conduct is really an outer manifestation of loving-kindness, of this attitude of kindness. It's an expression on the verbal and active level of this commitment to true kindness.

I just want to name the five precepts again, because they are part of the very basic agreement that we begin our practice here together with, that holds us together as a community. These being: the agreement not to take any life, not to harm other beings. The second one, the commitment not to take what is not freely offered. The third, for the period of the retreat, not to engage in sexual behavior; in our daily life, it's to refrain from sexual behavior that brings harm to ourselves or others or challenges or breaks in on another couple's commitment. The fourth is commitment to wise speech—not to lie, not to deceive ourselves or another, not to use harsh speech or divisive speech, and even not frivolous or gossip speech. Of course, here we're in noble silence, so that helps a lot. And the fifth, not to take drugs and intoxicants that cloud the mind, that cause heedlessness, that impair our judgment.

We say over and over that these basic five precepts, this commitment to non-harming in the most basic form, is the foundation of our practice. But I feel for myself it goes much, much deeper than simply a foundation from which we can just get this right, follow these precepts, and then get on to what's really important—concentration, the mindfulness, let's really get somewhere with our practice.

I feel that the practice of mindful attention to conscious speech and action, non-harming speech and action, is in itself a most profound gateway to liberating understanding. My speech, my action, is an actual expression of the stability and depth of my understanding of our essential oneness, of the love and compassion that is the natural expression of a free mind. By working with paying attention to how I am speaking and acting, how I am relating to the world, to others, to my environment—by nature of the quality of that attention, by the intention to understand and to purify—the depth of understanding then again grows deeper from the attention to speech and action. It's like a circle, but not a vicious circle. It's the other way, a beautiful circle.

So my religion of kindness is far from a naive or simplistic statement. In some ways, I see that it holds all the breadth and depth of the Buddhadharma, of our meditation practice, just looked at from different aspects.

The Buddha talked quite a lot about how morality or *sīla*, conscious conduct, is the foundation of our practice. He says in the Parinibbāna Sutta—and it's really not just one discourse, it covers a whole period of time before the Buddha's death—he says: concentration, when imbued with *sīla*, brings great fruit and profit. Wisdom, when imbued with concentration, brings great freedom and profit. The mind that is imbued with wisdom becomes completely free from the torments of sense desire, becoming, false views, and ignorance. It's one of those building block statements that begins with morality as the foundation for the freedom of deep understanding.

Even if we were simply to take these five precepts—not explore them very deeply, or their effect on our behavior very deeply, but simply obey them blindly as some kind of outer rule, thinking, "Okay, I have to do this to get on with my practice," or "I have to do this in order to be here," whatever reason—even with that attitude, were we to simply observe in speech and action these five precepts, it would be extremely

powerful.

Imagine if we just never killed another living being. Imagine if no one ever killed another human being. Or we never took another thing that wasn't offered. It's extremely powerful.

It is said that simply by following the precepts, change will naturally arise in our mind, in our understanding. Following the precepts gives power and control to our body, to our expressions in the world, to our actions, to our speech. Some increase in purity and clarity of mind will result simply from this practice, which is obvious, I would think. And also it gives rise to stronger loving-kindness and compassion.

You can see this even when I don't really deeply feel a sense of oneness with all beings, but I still refrain from slapping that mosquito. That has an effect. It just leaves a little space where I might get more of an inkling that we're actually beings here on the same planet, that to that being, life also matters. Simply paying attention to wise use of speech can create, in my own experience, much greater harmony with others and thus a sense of harmony and peace in myself. There's a lot less processing to do if I watch my mouth. And that leaves a lot more space to pay attention to what else is going on and to begin to actually notice our essential interconnectedness.

The Buddha says frequently that by protecting others, one protects oneself. Following the precepts, adhering to these simple rules, is outwardly a way of protecting others from harm, from our unskillful actions. And in that protection of others, we're then protecting ourselves from the direct result of our unskillful actions. For example, sarcastic, angry speech usually gets something similar coming back, just in a simple, obvious way.

It protects us from the remorse of things that we've done either out of hatred or greed or simple confusion, not knowing what was really wise. And this is something you'll probably notice from time to time over the course of these three months. It commonly comes up for us on retreat. Not guilt—not saying, "I was a bad person, I should suffer"—not tormenting yourself with self-judgment and self-hatred. That might happen too. But the remorse, the sense of reliving unskillful things that we've done with awareness, really allowing ourselves to experience in a way the pain that accrued to others and to ourselves from unskillful speech, unskillful action that we might have done in the past.

You might find the strangest little memories coming up. I remember one sitting when I started reliving a way I had been unkind to a friend of mine in the sixth grade. I had kind of blown her off to go be with some other little girls that I, for some reason, had some idea would be more socially advantageous for me to be friends with—I don't know what was going on in my little sixth-grade mind. But I really went through the pain of how selfish and unskillful and insensitive that had been. So it doesn't always have to be the most horrific thing you've ever done. Just the little ones arise, and we see that remorse and that experiencing of pain is one of the effects of unskillful action. Through our mindfulness, through our willingness to be open to and explore this, that's how we begin to deepen in the visceral understanding of

the fact that we're actually not separate. That by doing something inconsiderate and unkind to my friend in the sixth grade, I was hurting myself. Not just in some idea of hurting myself, but an actual visceral experience of pain.

So by protecting others, we're protecting ourselves. It's really quite beautiful, the interdependence there.

But for me, over the years I've been finding that working with conscious conduct has become much more subtle, much more profound than a simple adherence to a set of rules. It gets much more interesting, too, when you're really looking at the subtleties of it.

As you probably know, and which we'll talk about in much more detail in later talks, when the Buddha laid out his teachings of how to live a life of awareness and of freedom within what was called the Eightfold Path—eight aspects of life, of cultivation of heart and mind, the way to live—conscious conduct is three of those eight spokes. But it is not the first three.

The first step on the Eightfold Path is called wise understanding: understanding of how things are. This leads into the second step, which is variously translated as wise thought or wise intention or wise aspiration. And that then leads to the next three, which have to do with speech, action, and livelihood: wise speech, wise action, and wise livelihood.

What I get from this is that our understanding—how we understand the world—informs how we think, our intention, and that is what leads us to wise speech, wise action, and wise livelihood. If we didn't have some sense of understanding, we wouldn't be motivated to pay attention to our conduct and our speech at all. Whatever level, whatever degree our understanding is, it doesn't matter. There's some little glimmer there that this is important. Even if the glimmer is simply, "If I yell at people, they yell back at me and I don't like it." That's an understanding of cause and effect and of suffering. And that's enough. Even if it's only, "I really want to do this three-month course. I don't see what my behavior has to do with anything. I just want to sit on the cushion and get really concentrated. But they say I have to do this, so I'll do it." Even that somehow gets us to pay attention.

But on a level that to me is much more interesting and more subtle, we can look at our speech and our actions not only from the effect, the result of what happens when we say something, what happens when we do something—because that's not always in our control—but recognize that the core of our speech, the core of action, is in the intention, the volition that arises, that gives the energy for that thought, for that speech, for that action to occur.

So sīla is actually a morality of intention.

The intention is the place to which we can bring our mindfulness, our awareness and investigation. And that's much more workable and to me quite fascinating—more so than just waiting to see what the result is.

So what do I mean by intention, skillful or unskillful? This we will talk about a great deal, but simply put, there's a volition in the mind, a kind of impulse, that leads to thought, speech, or action. And it can be associated with a whole variety of mental states, states of mind or heart. So the intention to speak could be associated with hatred, with fear, with loving-kindness, with attachment, with generosity, with delusion, with indifference. You get the picture. The outer result—what one actually says—could be very similar and yet be coming from very different intentions. The same with how one acts.

For example, you could act with a really clear intention of compassion, but the conditions in the situation are such that the result is not at all what you would expect to happen. I was reading a biography of Sister Chân Không, and she was talking about having been in jail in Vietnam during the war. After some weeks in a very difficult situation, France had interceded and she was released. In the cell with her, which had been very crowded, there were two young girls, I think around twelve years old, who had been arrested because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time when a sweep was being made of Viet Cong—this was in a South Vietnam cell. As she was leaving and checking out with the head of the jail, she simply said, "You know, they didn't do anything, and this is really a bad environment for young girls. Wouldn't it be a great thing to let them go?" The effect was that the jail chief got really annoyed and said, "It's clear the prisoners are talking to each other. This is a bad thing." And he made the conditions much worse.

We can't control the results of conditions. The place we have to look when working with our morality, when working with our conscious conduct, is in our intentions. What is imbuing the intention with which we speak and act? It's very rich and interesting, I find.

And so you see, when we look in that way, I could be adhering to the letter of non-harming, I could be never taking what is not offered to me, but the intention behind it could be one of pride, or self-righteousness, or a sense of derision at other people who aren't living up to my high standards. Or it could be a real sense of caring. Or it could be a sense of total fear that if I do something wrong, I'll go to a hell realm. There are many possibilities for intentions. And of course, intentions arise anew in each moment, so we're never locked into one unchanging intention—which is a huge relief as we begin to explore why we say and do what we do. We might notice, "Okay, that one was a little ugly, but we're willing to look at it and see that it passes and be more present for the next speech or action."

So working with sila becomes much more profound than following a set of rules of behavior. I feel for myself that if I really practice it with integrity, with a real commitment—commitment to exploration, commitment to honesty, commitment to attention—it becomes a practice of freedom in itself, an expression of understanding and of connection.

I've also been discovering that the more I am able to use mindfulness as the tool to pay attention to my behavior, rather than just blind adherence to rules, the more space there is to really notice the subtlety of cause and effect. My relationship to conscious conduct, my relationship to the precepts, has less and less to do with any set of rules anywhere. More and more, it becomes internalized, completely experiential. I

don't really like to use inner and outer as such a dichotomy, but I'm saying inner as opposed to a set of rules.

The relationship to conscious conduct becomes quite experiential. For example, as soon as I move out of harmony, as soon as I speak or act from an intention of anger, an intention of greed, an intention of fear or self-righteousness—as soon as I speak or act from that place, I get feedback immediately. Not necessarily from the other person, although that's part of it, but from my own inner experience. The disharmony, the disruption of connectedness between me and the action and the person, gets much more easily experienced.

For example, I tend to be quite sarcastic in my humor. And the less attention I'm paying to myself—and the more tea I drink—the more sarcastic I tend to get. I'm quite amusing to myself; I'm having quite a good time. If I stop paying attention, at some point I often go over a little edge and say something that isn't at all amusing to the person I'm saying it to. It used to be that I would sometimes be completely oblivious to that. If the person didn't tell me something—and you know how usually people tell you a week later or three years later—I wouldn't even know it. But now it's much more immediate. As soon as it's out of my mouth, I know. Even before the person flinches in some subtle way, I know, because I feel it. It's actually a visceral experience. I think, "Oh, that was really unkind," or "out of harmony," or whatever particular terms you want to use. It's so clear. And it's not an intellectual thing.

I can't actually ignore noticing that anymore. It's easy, of course, to notice it and then, if one has a particular pattern, to simply move on rather than stop and say, "I'm sorry." But I really can't not notice it anymore.

And that's just a simple example. The sense I'm describing is that I don't need to say, "Oh yes, right, I'm not supposed to use harsh and abusive speech." I don't need to refer to the precept, because the experience in itself is one of shattering harmony, of acting as if we are not somehow living in oneness.

This becomes really interesting, because after a while you can't pretend anymore. It requires real honesty with myself. But this is the beauty of mindfulness—it's honest without being judgmental. It doesn't feed into a sense of self-worthlessness or thoughts like, "I'm a bad person, I'm disgusting, how could I say such a thing?" That thought might arise, but we just watch it come and go. That's our mindfulness practice.

What mindfulness does allow us to see, much more potently, is the reality of cause and effect—the immediacy of suffering that arises from speech that does not come from an intention of non-harming, but from an intention of self-aggrandizement or whatever the motivation might be.

In a way, all the precepts really come down to mindfulness. Thich Nhat Hanh puts it this way: mindfulness is the fundamental precept. Think of the precepts as manifestations of mindfulness. Because when you're mindful, you're responsible. And then the precepts are not needed to dictate our behavior. When we're mindful, it's so obvious. We don't have to think about it. It's simply obvious: be kind to one another and to

ourselves. There's not a lot more to say.

Just as our wisdom grows through attention to our behavior, our motivation, our intentions—and also through our meditation practice, through our willingness to simply be open and present for whatever happens—through all of this, our understanding of the nature of ourselves, of life, of freedom is bound to grow. We can't stop it, no matter how we try. And we'll try every way we can think of. But as long as we're willing to be really present and open and clear, a sense of understanding and wisdom will continue to develop, broaden, and deepen. It just keeps going on and on.

For me, in working with the precepts, I've found it's the same way. As I pay attention and notice more subtleties of cause and effect and intention, as wisdom develops, my relationship to the depth and profundity of each precept also widens and grows.

And I start to wonder—I do wonder often within myself—where do I draw the boundaries? In seeing more and more how widely my speech and actions affect others, where can I draw the boundary? Do I draw it at myself? At myself and the person I'm directly in relationship with at that moment? Do I draw the boundaries at the family, the community, the state, the world? Do I draw it only with people? What about the environment?

Where does my self stop and another begin? Where do we reach the boundary of the depth and profundity of following these precepts, of seeing how our actions and speech ripple outward and touch and affect all other beings, all other aspects of this universe?

Metta and compassion—loving-kindness and compassion—are described as boundless states. Boundless meaning no limits can be placed on them; you can't come to the end of it, to some place that is somehow excluded from the state of love and compassion. They are expressions and manifestations of the boundlessness of freedom. And if the precepts, if our conscious conduct, is an expression of our understanding, then that too must in some way approach a boundlessness—an understanding of where and how we are all interconnected, and how our actions and speech affect one another.

I'm not going to go through all five precepts, perhaps just the first couple. But I want to share some of the way my mind works when I start reflecting on or paying attention to a precept itself, and how it continues to grow and develop and get broader and broader. There are no answers. I really see how you can't have a fixed rule of how to behave, because it's far too complex.

What do I mean by that? Thich Nhat Hanh speaks a lot about working with conscious conduct. He says it's essential that we not expect to begin by being perfect—because that's very difficult—but that at least we incline our minds in that direction.

Looking at the first precept, not harming other beings, not killing other beings—it's incredible. That one commitment not to harm other beings, how much of our behavior does it involve? And where, in any particular moment, do I draw the boundary? Where do I consciously or unconsciously choose not to see

the interrelatedness?

Where do we each make our choices? Because who can do this one perfectly? How can we live in this world, the way it is, without ever harming another living being? It seems almost impossible. Just taking antibiotics is harming those little organisms—except for some of us, because it doesn't work at all.

But boiling water. Driving in a car—I'm really aware every time I'm driving of all the bugs smashing against the windshield. And some people, like the Jains, will make choices that we don't make, wearing masks so as not to breathe in insects, and so forth. There are all levels to how far we take this.

You can see there's no way to make a rule and say, "This is what's right, this means non-harming, and this part's okay." But for each of us, in our own willingness to pay attention to our conduct—and again, here is where it comes back to intention rather than focusing so much on outer results.

Robert Aitken Roshi, a Zen Roshi in Hawaii, says that the practice of peace and harmony *is* peace and harmony, not some technique designed to bring it about. I think of that a lot—of really bringing my intentions, how I relate to the world, to be those of compassion and love, to try to *be* peace and harmony, rather than trying to draw up a list of things. "Well, if I never eat meat, that's how I'm not going to harm other beings. If I only drive a car when I have to, that's how I'm never going to harm other beings." It's not an easy answer.

Here at IMS, we've gone through lots of bouts with trying to find our communal relationship to this. And if you think it's hard finding your own relationship to difficult situations, try to do it with twenty-five people. And then every year the group changes and you go through it again.

Or with the cockroaches. You might have a chance to make friends with some of them this fall. I don't know quite how vital our cockroach population is this fall—it varies from year to year. But we've gone through a lot over the years in relationship to our deeply held commitment to non-harming behavior, to a sense of our interconnectedness, to whatever sense each person brings of connectedness or disgust at cockroaches, to our need to abide by health laws out of fear that we're going to get shut down, to our need not to have the yogis be really disgusted seeing too many cockroaches in the wrong places. There's a whole list of where we make the decisions and out of what.

I remember a period just a few years ago where we had sessions of all getting together and doing metta meditation to the cockroaches, asking them to leave because if they didn't, we were going to have to do something stronger. Then we all made a commitment to go home and do metta every day, each one of us, for a certain period of time for the cockroaches. Then we got in touch with some bug psychics in Vermont. We really tried, you know. And it didn't work. It didn't work at all. They were very happy and multiplying.

And it's difficult. When you have to do something that is actively harming another being, there's a certain level where you can't get around that fact. In that moment of doing it—but at least it's done quite consciously, really paying attention to the effects and to the whole rippling impact of what's going on.

So that's just one example, but there are no easy answers in this.

When I first went to Thailand, before I ordained as a nun, I was staying in the temple north of Bangkok where I was going to ordain. It was my first night there, and my hair was very long—I hadn't cut it yet. I was sleeping on the floor of the little hut, the little kuti. I woke up in the middle of the night, and somehow the place was just infested with ants. My hair was filled with ants. They were all over me. And I was new in Thailand. I wasn't quite equanimous yet.

So in the morning, I went to the abbot, a very well-known abbot in Thailand. His secretary, another monk, said, "Oh, no problem." He came running out with a big can of Raid. And I was shocked. I was really shocked. Oh my God. It was just pragmatic.

I ran into the same thing at Plum Village with Sister Chan Khong, where they had some kind of little spiders that really freaked out the guests staying there. And the next thing I knew, she was in there with bug spray. And again, I thought, I can't believe it.

There are no easy answers, but a refuge—my refuge—is in the sincerity of intention, of commitment to integrity, and in the willingness to see as far as possible the ramifications, to be as conscious as I'm able to in this moment. In some moments that's more conscious than others. And then to take responsibility for the action I take part in.

So how do we practice peace and harmony?

It's possible, for example, to be a vegetarian out of a deep respect for not harming animals. And it's possible to be a vegetarian filled with disdain and loathing for the people who eat meat. Not the same thing. That's not practicing peace and harmony exactly. It's possible to really live a non-harming life outwardly and be filled with hatred for the people who are harming. No, that's also not really quite a non-harming life.

This is from Robert Aitken again: "The industrialist says it's a dog-eat-dog world. The bodhisattva does not deny that fact, but only the spirit of such a statement. He or she follows the way of compassion, nurturing all beings and being nurtured by them."

So where do we draw the boundaries? I wonder a lot at the violence in our culture here, and of course I don't know, but I wonder how much of it has to do with the violence on TV, the violence in the movies. It becomes a really deep question for me: if I pay to go to a violent movie, am I contributing to the violence in the culture? I don't know.

Thich Nhat Hanh actually talks about this aspect under the fifth precept—not taking in intoxicants or drugs or substances that cause heedlessness or cloud the mind. Under this he includes paying attention to the shows we watch, what we take in through television and media. And you can really see this. I haven't done this in a long time, but I remember I used to come home from work and turn on the TV, which was

total trash, and sit there like a zombie for three hours, like I was stuck in glue, completely unable to get up. I might as well have drunk myself into a stupor. It was just the same effect.

So where do we draw the line? Each of us will find that for ourselves, and for me it's constantly shifting and changing. It's the beauty of mindfulness—that it's just about being awake in this moment. And this moment is constantly changing, so it's not that we can take some static line and say, "This is it." It takes awakeness, awareness, and new integrity and honesty in each minute. The more we do that, the more we become attuned to our essential oneness, and the more natural an expression of non-harming becomes.

The same is true with the second precept: not taking what is not given. It's obviously about not stealing, not taking other people's property. But it's not always that blatant. For example here, what about that really nice shampoo somebody left in the bathroom? Even if you don't know for sure, you think it's been there for a few days, and probably nobody would care. But you don't really know that. Again, look not at the action, but at the intention that's giving rise to the action.

If you turn it around to a more positive expression, rather than not taking what's not given, this precept to me is a way of expressing a deep sense of inner contentment. When I'm deeply in tune with a sense of unity, a sense of innate completeness, I don't need things. I don't need to take anything from anybody. There's not that sense of needy want.

Dogen, the great Zen master of Japan, said, "The self and the world are just as they are. The gate of emancipation is open." That mind of wanting, the mind of greed, of needing—you know, whatever it is: "That zafu, nobody's sat on that cushion for four days now, and I'm sure it's a much better seat than the one I have"—that mind is what shuts the gate of emancipation. And so this not taking what's not given is really a way of opening us to the inner contentment that opens our mind and heart to freedom. Very powerful.

Can enough be enough? Deep appreciation of life, of experience, of this moment, of awareness, just as it is. Not much else is needed. Aitken Roshi says that not only in stealing are we stealing from others—we're stealing the potential of inner peace from ourselves in that moment.

Is stealing part of our economic system? I just read this the other day in the New York Times, interviewing different people with different opinions during that human population conference in Cairo. This was one man's opinion, the president of the World Watch Institute. We're talking about food needs, and he said that we've entered a new era in which satisfying the need for seafood, for example, of the ninety million people being added each year requires reducing the consumption for those already on Earth. Satisfying the demand for grain also means reducing the consumption of those already here.

That really hit me—the sense that every time I eat grain, there's more for me and less for somebody else. There's a direct correlation. If I eat seafood, that means somebody else doesn't get it. It struck me in some way. I mean, that's maybe how it always is, but in terms of population, we're reaching the outer limits.

Before, it always seemed like there was so much it didn't matter. Now, it matters.

And so when I pay attention—of course we need to eat—but I certainly begin, hopefully, to pay more attention to how much I eat and how much I throw away. I don't pay as much attention to that as I could, but I am beginning to be aware how vital that is.

Where do we draw the line at not taking what is not given? Who can make that distinction for us?

From the Tao Te Ching: "Be content with what you have. Rejoice in the way things are. When you realize there is nothing lacking, the whole world belongs to you."

In many ways, that's our practice here together. When we can appreciate just what is, we realize that nothing is lacking. The whole world belongs to us. And that's how it is, actually, in every moment. When we can stop just for an instant, just long enough to be fully awake and present right here and now—in that, we touch our essential completeness, our deep interrelatedness, the fact that we cannot speak or act without affecting others, and vice versa.

It's our mindful awareness that allows for this growth in depth and subtlety of understanding, that allows for change. It's not that we have to suddenly start panicking—"Oh no, everything I do affects everyone else in the world, and I have to stop eating! Maybe if I starve to death somebody else can eat in the Horn of Africa!" It's not about that. It's not about guilt. It's not about self-righteousness. It's not about fear.

It's simply to let this tool of mindfulness shine its light on our connections, on our intentions, on our speech and action, with a willingness to simply look honestly. And I think that's enough—that our conscious conduct will naturally become an expression of our deepening understanding, an expression of love, an expression of realization, an expression of our oneness with all beings. And again, lead us into a deeper and deeper relationship with that.

So let's just sit together for a moment.

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