

THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY FOR YOU TO GO

If you can see some light ahead of you, you should make the choice to go in that direction—then right there are the actual precepts.



It is not possible to understand and accept the precepts with only the mind, so physical practice should go along with intellectual practice. If you study the precepts with just your head, you will compare one precept to the other, and it may be difficult to accept that one precept is the source of all precepts. Even before you observe all of the sixteen precepts one by one and see their true meaning, already when one precept is there you are studying all the precepts.

It does not work to face each problem you have just by studying the sixteen precepts. When you face a problem, you must make some decision about

which way you will go, a dark way or a promising way. If you can see some light ahead of you, you should make the choice to go in that direction—then right there are the actual precepts. These kinds of actual precepts can be found when you face a real problem in that way. That is how you actually observe precepts, how precepts make sense, and how precepts help you.

Precepts show you the way before you go. When you drive somewhere, you follow the signs. If you are not going to take a trip, signs won't make any difference, but when you decide to drive a car from San Francisco to Los Angeles, you follow the signs, and then the signs make sense.

Your actual life comes first. In this sense, whether you are Buddhist or Christian, for example, doesn't matter. Each one of us has our own problems, and they are not Christian problems or Buddhist problems. If you compare Christian precepts to Buddhist precepts, you create a difficulty. But if you are concentrated on your actual life, moment after moment, and are sincere and honest, then there is no difference between Christian and Buddhist precepts.

A sign is just a sign that shows which way to go. If your way of life is concentrated on that point, there is no need to decide whether it is Christian or Buddhist. It doesn't matter. In that sense, what Christian people think is right is right for Buddhists too. If there are two ways, something is wrong with the precepts. There is only one way for you to go. Because of your egoistic desire, you want to make an excuse when you take the wrong course, so you may say "Buddha said" or "Christ said." When you say "Buddhism" or "Christianity,"

mostly you are making some excuse. The way is very simple and the best way is just to follow the signs.

If you really want to know what precepts are, you should concentrate on what you do. You don't even need to think about precepts. Then naturally you will find your own way. If you take a trip from San Francisco to Los Angeles every day, then you don't have to think so much about the way to get to Los Angeles. The only thing to think about is how to get to Los Angeles without having an accident. That is the point: not the precepts, but how to be concentrated in each moment driving from San Francisco to Los Angeles.

So we put an emphasis on the actual practice of zazen or shikantaza, on how to be concentrated on what we do moment after moment. Shikantaza is to live in each moment, so you can apply shikantaza in your everyday life. The point is to be concentrated on what you do in its true sense, without seeking for anything inside or outside. It is to do everything in harmony with your surroundings. When you ignore your actual activity, thinking about something else, that is not real practice.

If you miss the practice in your everyday life, you will regret it. The only way to be yourself and to be with everyone is by doing your best. When you are with everyone, you are keeping the precepts without knowing it.

If you become you yourself, and if your practice includes everything, moment after moment the precepts are with you. That may be more important than a verbal transmission of precepts. If I try to explain the written precepts,

it takes time. But how you keep them, in short, is to live in each moment and to be sincere with yourself always, without looking around. You must be you, that's all.