

DO NOT SELL LIQUOR

If you want to keep the precept, keep it before the intoxicating liquor comes.

The fifth precept is “Do not sell liquor,” or “Do not take liquor.” These are nearly the same, but the precept says “Do not sell liquor.” Intoxicating liquor does not mean just *sake* and wine. A teaching that intoxicates you is also intoxicating liquor. I am very ashamed of myself for selling you this kind of liquor, but because I am a priest, I think I must say something.

Dogen Zenji explained this precept by saying, “Don’t be intoxicated: even before the intoxicating liquor comes, do not violate this precept.” When you have no liquor, how is it possible to violate the precept of not selling liquor?

When you have nothing to sell, how can you sell it? Dogen Zenji says not to sell liquor even when we have no liquor, but we are still selling liquor even when we don’t have any.

“Do not sell liquor even when you haven’t got any”: this is a wonderful interpretation of the fifth precept. Actually, when you try not to drink liquor that you already have, it is too late. If you have it here, you will drink it. The most important point is not to create the idea of liquor when you don’t have any. If you want to keep the precept, keep it before the intoxicating liquor comes. This is very appropriate advice for us.

DO NOT BECOME ANGRY

You become angry easily because your mind gets caught by superficial, trivial things. When your effort becomes concentrated on the true spirit of Zen, it is not so easy to be angry.



The Buddha said that if we become angry, all of our virtue will be gone at once. Anger is the most dangerous thing.

The opposite of anger is patience, and it is important to be patient when we study our way. The Buddha said that practicing the wisdom of patience is more important even than observing the precepts.

When we become angry, we lose everything. We lose the point. You come to a zendo to study our way, but if you become angry with someone, you will lose

your way. You will lose the point of why you came to the zendo and you will most likely feel that you want to leave all at once. Five minutes before, you had no idea of leaving, but your mind changes all at once and you think "I have to leave! There is no point in being here." You have lost the point already just because of anger.

We know that once we become angry, it is hard to stop it; it is too late to stop anger once it appears. So constant, incessant practice is necessary.

To practice constantly, in your mind there should be no gap from one practice to another; no gap between your practice of zazen, your practice of generosity, and your observance of precepts. If you have the right understanding, these are all aspects of one practice, so there cannot be any gap between one practice and another. However, often a student's understanding is piece by piece: "Here is precept observance. Here is zazen. Here is generosity practice." If you understand it in this way, there is a gap, but if you understand that your practice is just one practice with many sides, there is no gap between them. Zazen and everyday activity—everyday activity and zazen—are two sides of the one practice, and there should not be any gap. This is how we understand our way.

Our way is constant patience. But actually there is no need to practice patience: if your practice of Zen is right, you will naturally be patient.

We should not lose our way just because of something that occurs all of a sudden, like anger, mistrust, or other negative feelings between people. We should always know why we are here. This is the most important point in our practice. We should always remember the purpose of our practice. We should not give up.

We may be enjoying our daily life, but it will not always be so. At some point something that we do not like will happen to us. We don't know what will happen, or when, but something will happen. In that case we should know what we are actually doing in our practice. Do not run away from your practice when something happens that you don't like.

At Eiheiji monastery we had a big earthquake, and there were many people, supposedly Zen students, who felt it and immediately ran away. But one person, though they looked like a very ordinary Zen student, without saying anything just stayed and helped with the problem. Our practice should be like that.

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When I was in school, the head of the Buddhist university always told us that we should not be concerned about what people do, we should be concerned about what *we* do. He said that we should be friends to heaven and earth, and that we should first of all be friends to our practice, and that we should not be friends to human beings. I couldn't understand him. "You should not be a friend of human beings," he would say, "your friend is heaven and earth."

Now I understand what he meant. When your practice is real practice that includes heaven and earth, that is Zen practice. You shouldn't be involved in the confusion that we have in our human world. This is a very serious thing for us. If we become angry with some trivial thing, we have no time to practice our way. One after another this kind of thing happens to us. We should remember this point, and not be caught by trivial things. This is the teaching of constant patience, or the middle way of practice.