

Aired 05/09/2021 – [Watch on YouTube](#) (high-speed available)

“The suffering and happiness each of us experiences is a reflection of the distortion or clarity with which we view ourselves and the world.”
~the Dalai Lama

Our spiritual journeys are a process – one we structure ourselves to a large extent. Each faith tradition suggests a particular process that helps us organize that journey – from the 12 Steps of AA to the Ignatian Examen to the Buddhist Eightfold Path, and others.

Last Sunday we focused on the Eightfold Path from the Buddhist faith tradition, one which has been called “a religion of infinite compassion.” Far from theoretical speculation, the Buddha gave us a process which is clear, practical, and attainable.

The Eightfold Path is the Buddha’s answer to the fact of human suffering – we desire, we gain and lose, and we suffer as a result. The only solution is the get off the treadmill entirely, and the Buddha showed us how. With persistence and patience we can make progress on this path.

The “homework” this week was to select one step on the eightfold path and practice it. Did you manage it? Which one did you select, and what are your thoughts after practicing this step for a few days?

Here is the Eightfold Path from the Buddhist tradition. *As we discuss and explore it, think about your own steps to deeper wisdom and self-awareness – do you have steps to add here?*

Remember that the first consideration, even before we arrive at Step 1, is “right association.” Choose your community wisely – make sure they lift you up, inspire you to your highest and best. After that:

Step 1: Right View. Self-awareness, clarity, and reason.

Step 2: Right Intent. Why are you doing what you’re doing? Are your actions in accord with your deepest desires for who you want to be?

Step 3: Right Speech. Again, why do you speak the way you do? Examine your motivations, and take the actions needed to change.

Step 4: Right Conduct. Same idea. What are your motivations for the way you behave? Only when you gain this self-awareness can you change from destructive, ego-based behaviors to those that reflect the greater truth of connection and oneness.

Step 5: Right Livelihood. What does this mean to you?

Step 6: Right effort. Slow and steady is the answer – keep going and don't give up, no matter how many times you step off the path.

Step 7: Right Mindfulness. This step encourages us to see ourselves, and our lives, fully and clearly, here and now, and break the bonds of the ignorance and illusion that bind us. How do you approach this step?

Step 8: Right Concentration. Here we learn to quiet and focus our minds. The story goes that the Buddha was once asked "What do you get through meditation?" He replied "nothing at all." The man then asked "Then, Blessed One, what good is it?" and the Buddha responded "let me tell you what I lost through meditation: sickness, anger, depression, insecurity, the burden of old age, the fear of death. That is the good of meditation, which leads to nirvana."

Remember the first principle articulated in the Dhammapada - "Our life is shaped by our mind; we become what we think." *What are the ramifications of this principle for you?*