

Hatred and Love Carol Valentine

While watching the news over the past few weeks I was struck by what was happening in the Middle East. Maybe many of you have seen the news too. It is hard to miss the stories of what is happening in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza areas, which are the Palestinian areas of Israel.

Three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped and killed in the West Bank area. Then, a Palestinian teenager was kidnapped and killed in retaliation. Every day there is news about Israel sending rockets into Palestinian areas and Palestinian missiles and rockets being fired into Israel. So far there have been over 200 airstrikes launched, with hundreds of innocent people being killed. This mutual anger/hatred has been going on for decades; this latest conflict for the past 14 years, with perhaps no end in sight. Many of the civilians want the conflict to end but the ones in power are stuck in their thoughts of revenge and seem to be unable to think differently. This dharma talk was not intended to be a “downer”, since you know that I think of Buddhism as a religion of joy and gratitude but thinking of all of the destruction and the continuing conflicts made me reflect on Buddha’s teaching about hatred.

Buddha said “Hatred does not cease by hatred, but only by love; this is the eternal rule.” This is a universal law although we often forget it when our egos are bruised in a conflict. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict may never end, as long as there are people in power who want revenge. Somehow, they believe that violence will make the violence stop but as the Dalai Lama said, “Through violence, you may “solve” one problem, but you sow the seeds for another.” This seems to be true for gangs or cartels or mafia here in the US too. There are no cease fires only revenge killings that never stop no matter how many people are hurt. You may be asking, why talk about these things we have no control over? We can’t affect the Middle East, or gangs or drug cartels, so now what? What can we do? We are just regular ordinary people living on a small island.

The answer is, there is much we can do as regular ordinary people. We can keep the Buddha’s words in our minds, in our hearts and in our actions. We can make sure we do not meet anger with anger, do not meet hatred with hatred. Can we change the minds of people in the Middle East? No chance. Can we change the minds of gang members? Probably not. Can we take responsibility for ourselves and change our own minds? Most definitely Yes! If we take the 8-Fold Path to our hearts, we will have better relationships with everyone around us. The 8-Fold Path can bring peace, not only to us but to those around us. Remember, the 8-Fold Path is a guideline for us to follow in our everyday lives. We have to remember, too, that when the 8-Fold Path says “Right View” or “Right Thought”, it isn’t talking about who’s right and who’s wrong. It isn’t that kind of “right.” It is “right” as in the way to live with compassion and love.

As the Dalai Lama said “Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.”

Buddhism is not about saying we are a Buddhist, or coming to church every week, although those things are important. Buddha taught that we need to keep the concepts of Buddhism in our hearts on a daily basis. Saying the words isn’t enough if we don’t live the words we say. I found 10 things we can do to make the world a better place and they are related to the 8-Fold Path. It actually came from a website called “Tiny Buddha”, a website with many resources.

Ready to learn what we can do to help the world? Here are possible steps and they are simple and doable.

1. Smile at others.(Right Action)
2. Make eye contact with people.(Right Effort)
3. Take care of our environment. (Right Effort)
4. Compliment others. (Right Speech)
5. Be positive. (Right Thought)
6. Help others. (Right Action) Could also be Right Thought, Right Livelihood, Right Effort
7. Be kinder to ourselves. (Right View)
8. Stay mindful in the present moment. (Right Mindfulness)
9. Express gratitude daily. (Right Speech) Could also be Right Thought, Right Action, Right Mindfulness.
10. Have fun. (Right Action)

Remember 2 weeks ago when I talked about going on a Thought Diet? I won't ask you to raise your hands to show if you are doing this or not. Now the Thought Diet doesn't mean you can't think negative thoughts, just that you notice when you have those negative thoughts and try to change them to something positive. I have been using this with myself over the past 2 weeks and I am surprised at the number of negative thoughts I have on a daily basis, usually judgmental thoughts that I then change into something more positive. Doesn't happen consistently and I still have complaints but it is making me more aware. Try it yourself. It can change your thinking.

Please join me in gassho. This is a passage from the Dhammapada.

Conquer the angry man by love.

Conquer the ill-natured man by goodness.

Conquer the miser with generosity.

Conquer the liar with truth.

Thank you for listening.