



Greetings. This is Zenju, and welcome to Part four of a four-part series, “Freedom from Managing Your Reality or Your Life.” And so, we’ll begin by just sitting in silence, as we’ve done in the past part sessions, and if you would begin, excuse me, if you would begin by just breathing, and just breathing. We’re doing nothing but that.

No management, no accounting. No knowing it. Don’t have to know how to breathe. And when I ring the bell, you can just come back to a more wakeful state. Okay. Good. So I’d like to start off with a poem, as I have done in the other sessions, and this week's poem is called “Human Race.”

“Life is no endurance test in which we must race like wild horses being chased from behind, barely hearing the sound of creeks running over small stones. Rushing forward, we fall over jettied cliffs in an earth-pounding gallop to claim the gifts thought to be scarce. At the bottom of the canyon, the serenity we thought was lost crawls out from inside and presents itself while we are on the ground. No need to compete for the inherent gifts, exhausting ourselves in fierce competition, making less or more of our lives, blinded by the beauty of another’s cloak. There is no more admirable work than to breathe and to turn back in the middle of the race, avoiding crumbled edges along the way. You return to the creek, where water rolls over stones, and then, ever so lightly, you make footprints in the direction of home, where your heart lives, where tea is ready, and you are invited.”

So, I’m going to read it one more time. It’s a rather long one, and just take in the words that come to you, not the ones that are not coming to you. “Life is no endurance test in which we must race like wild horses being chased from behind, barely hearing the sound of creeks running over small stones. Rushing forward, we fall over jettied cliffs in an earth-pounding gallop to claim the gifts thought to be scarce. At the bottom of the canyon, the serenity we thought was lost crawls out from inside and presents itself while we are on the ground. No need to compete for the inherent gifts, exhausting ourselves in fierce competition, making less or more of our lives, blinded by the beauty of another’s cloak. There is no more admirable work than to breathe, to turn back in the middle of the race, avoiding crumbled edges along the way. You return to the creek, where water rolls over stones, and then, ever so lightly, you make footprints in the direction of home, where your heart lives and tea is ready and you are invited.”

So, thank you. I chose that poem, especially the part where “at the bottom of the canyon, the serenity we thought was lost crawls out from inside and presents itself while we are on the ground.” So, it really speaks to that unfolding that we’ve been talking about in this series and that unfolding being freedom and allowing things to come up and out of us that are quite



magical, things that we wouldn't expect or suspect, whatever word you want to use. So last week our question was how do you know the path of life and if we're managing that path?

How do you know the path of it if you haven't walked it? How do you know the path of life if you haven't walked it? So there's a way in which we were trying to reach the end of the journey. We even know what we are expecting at the end of that journey, so we begin to manage it. How can you manage that if you don't even know? And we don't. We really don't know. There's an unfolding in our lives, and so we don't know this end, other than we do know that there is what we call death, and we don't know that either.

And so, but we're still even managing that, some of us, the death and how it will happen and when and where. So we talked about examples of freedom, and the last example we talked about was an example of a path of freedom and the example was dharma and dharma as a path of freedom, where teachings are laid out for us and they are taught and we read about them. And then sometimes we try to take those things on and think we know them, but there also is an unfolding on this path, a not knowing until we go over the cliffs.

At the bottom of the canyon, there's serenity. We didn't – might not have even known there is serenity there. And so there is a way in which the teachings also have to unfold, even though we might be able to speak the words and talk about enlightenment and talk about wisdom or right speech or these things. They have maybe not unfolded in our lives yet. And so I offer these paths – these examples of freedom and taking refuge in them to help relieve us of managing our lives and managing our reality.

So, so far, we have taken a refuge in buddha as an example of freedom, and we have taken refuge in dharma as an example of the path of freedom. And so, third, I'd like us to take refuge in a sangha, and being that, an example of companionship in freedom. And so, we think we're kind of going along, along in life alone and no one is impacting our movement, and so we manage our lives, hoping that the person next to us won't impact it, you know? But the person or the other living beings are or the existence of things are.

Trees, everything is impacting and moving our way into life and in life. And so this third example of freedom, a companionship in freedom, which is often called *sangha*, is a way in which you can create an environment and be aware of the companionship that is needed in life. And so often when we are managing our lives, there is a way in which we are forgetting that there is companionship in this life. And so, if we think about a sangha, a community, a



partnership per se in the freedom that we exist in in life, then we are probably less likely to manage it.

And so I am offering in this teaching this companionship and bringing that forward as a part of the freedom, as part of relieving us of managing, because there's no need if there are folks and other living beings and things around us. There's no need to manage as much as we do. And also, there is a natural place. Sangha is a natural place. Our community is a natural place to experience freedom. And oftentimes, these places don't feel that way. There's a lot of struggle within there, because there are people there when we get there. And so we are hesitant to be with people when we think of freedom. When we think of freedom, many people think of people disappearing from the vision. Without people, there is freedom.

And I think that is something that some of us learn along the way, that you have to go away, you have to disengage to have freedom. But it's quite the opposite. To have freedom is to be engaged and to be in relationship and friendship and companionship with other living beings. And this is so that we don't have to manage our lives. We can be joined in our lives, and not to long for others, but to be joined by who is present. It's kind of like that song that Bill – I think it's Bill Withers. I'm not sure. No, Bill Withers is "Lean On Me," but the song where being – "Loving the One You're With." Maybe that is still Bill Withers. Excuse me on that. I can't remember the name, but maybe someone can let me know. But it's the song where it's loving the one you're with, and I used to couldn't really stand that song. I didn't like it, "love the one you're with." And I didn't understand it, because it's like, no, I don't want to love the one I'm with, you know? I want to go find that person. I want to go find that love. I want to create it, actually.

And later, as I've grown older, I realized it's the dharma. Love the one you're with is being with those who are right with you, who are right with you right now, and not managing this community or not managing your interrelationship. And I think we're born into families for that very reason. We are born into families so that we learn that right away, that we are in relationship, and in this relationship is where it's our canyon in which the serenity and the peace and the love will come out of.

And so that is very important to look at and explore around freedom and explore around relieving ourselves of managing our lives. And so, I'd like to look at my notes and let you know what our question is for this session. And the question is, "If you are busy managing your own life, where is the time to join others who are walking the path of freedom and liberation"



“If you are busy managing your own life, where is the time to join others who are walking the path of freedom and liberation?” And so, if we’re too busy with our fears, fear of humiliation, fear of not being recognized, fear of not getting there, if we’re too busy with our habits and our motives and maneuvering and manipulating, you know, we’re going to miss out on being interrelated and being with people.

We’re going to miss out on the companionship that is offered in freedom. We’re going to be what most of us talk about a lot and continue, century after century, which is being lonely. And so, that is one of the greatest... I would say desire, is to not be lonely. Many of us are in search of not being lonely in our managing our lives. We’re trying to manage not to be lonely, and we end up being lonely.

And so, this question, “If you are busy managing your own life, where is the time to join others who are walking the path of freedom and liberation?” – or to join others, period? Let’s just say join others to be connected, interrelated. If we’re busy managing, you know, our own lives. And so it goes like this: We get up, we work our 9 to 5, we work very hard, some of us. Some, you’ve heard of stories where people work, instead of 40 hours, they work 80 hours a week. They see their family every now and then. They just keep working and working and working until, perhaps, they suddenly become ill. And then, they can’t work anymore and they don’t, they’re not going to get to. Suddenly they’re so ill, they’re not going to get to take that vacation they’ve been creating, you know, saving the money for, you know? Or for their retirement they are looking forward to. Suddenly their life is going to end. And so, the last time they get to see and really speak and express their love to their loved one is on their deathbed.

And they have worked so hard, and to end up for that to be the last moment. So some of us are doing that. We’re working ourselves to death, and then when the death comes, we’re like, “Oh, I worked myself to death.” And so, in these teachings that I’m presenting are trying to bring us off of the edge, you know, off of the cliff, you know, off of the crumbled edge, where we’re like horses running, competing against each other, trying to get here, trying to get there, and in the end, we may fall. We may not even die. We may just fall and be alive and be lucky enough to feel the serenity and the peace that may come from the fall, eventually. Or we may not be. And so what we expect of our lives are what keeps us managing our lives.

So if we could maybe release some of those expectations, which would definitely help in relieving the disappointments, and relax into our lives and allow the people around us to be around us, the sangha to be part of our life, our family, our friends, and let that be freedom, that that is freedom, to have people around us, to be interrelated and not to wait and to manufacture something that you think might end your loneliness.

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So, it's very important to see freedom as an ever-evolving life and to not look for the future island, that this is the island, you know, not to look for the future island and the future people to be on the island with you, that the future people are with you, to love the one you're with. Love the one you're with. And life is passing, and we have a *han*, a wooden block in the Zen center, and when the block is being tapped, it's tapped very loudly. And what it says on that block is life is passing. Life is passing quickly, you know? And it's like gone, gone, and don't waste this time and don't waste this life, you know, managing it. Now. Come now to it.

So every time you hear the *han*, it's come now to it, to this life. Come now to it. And you can't do that while you're managing it. And some of the people are coming with you, so see the people next to you coming with you. That companionship in freedom is very important. And so that is the example of companionship in freedom, is your family, your sangha. It's right there. Your freedom is right there with you. It's not ahead. It's not managed. It's not maneuvered into your life.

And so I want to go over the four questions that are over the four weeks. And the four questions are: One, how can we secure or manage a life that is groundless by nature? Two, if you are managing your reality, your life, how can you come into a full blossom of that which is unknown to you at this time? Three, how do you know the path of life, that which has not been unfolded? If you are busy managing your life, where is the time to join others who are walking the path of freedom and liberation? So, I'm going to say the questions again. How can you secure or manage a life that is groundless by nature? If you are managing your reality, how can you come into a full blossom of that which is unknown to you at this time? How do you know the path of life, that which has not been unfolded? If you are busy managing your life, where is the time to join others who are walking the path of freedom and liberation or just simply to join others who are right with you and to see companionship in the freedom?

How can you do that while you're busy managing everything? So then we had examples of freedom, and that was the three, it's usually called The Three Jewels. We have examples of freedom that are usually called The Three Jewels, and that is usually the buddha, dharma, sangha. And so, I asked you to look at buddha as an example of freedom. And so, when you have these examples, you can look at them.

So buddha as an example of freedom, dharma as an example of a path of freedom, and sangha, our community, as an example of companionship in freedom. And so, if you take refuge in these, if you're feeling overwhelmed by managing everything and things are out of control, take refuge in these three examples of freedom. Take refuge in these three examples, teacher, teaching, and community. And so, I am going to ask you to share some of these things that we have been

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talking about with others, and that is beginning of cultivating your companionship in freedom, to begin to share your life and the inquiry of life.

I'm not talking about necessarily sharing your secrets or things that you don't want to share about your life, but just sharing your life as it is, as it's unfolding, being present, walking and talking with others, having tea with others, just being present, saying hello, to even folks you may not know. And that is really all I can offer you. In the way that I have walked my life, this is what I have come to share with you. And so, now I'm asking you to share with others. And so, I am going to read the poem one more time, and then we are going to have silence. And so, the poem is "Human Race."

"Life is no endurance test in which we must race like wild horses being chased from behind, barely hearing the sound of creeks running over small stones. Rushing forward, we fall over jettied cliffs in an earth-pounding gallop to claim the gifts thought to be scarce. At the bottom of the canyon, the serenity we thought was lost crawls out from inside and presents itself while we are on the ground. No need to compete for the inherent gifts, exhausting ourselves in fierce competition, making less or more of ourselves, blinded by the beauty of another's cloak. There is no more admirable work than to breathe, to turn back in the middle of the race, avoiding crumbling edges along the way. You return to the creek, where water rolls over stones, and then, ever so lightly, you make footsteps in the direction of home, where your heart lives, where tea is ready, and you are invited."

I do hope that this series has benefitted you and that you are more relieved of what you think you have to do in your life and that you feel freedom that already exists in your life, that is already available. Go well and be well. Thank you. We should sit silent for a moment.

When I ring the bell, you can come to your wakefulness. Thank you.