



Welcome back. So glad you're staying with these practices of engaging with the truths of suffering. My name is Reverend Liên Shutt. Today the last in the series we come to the fourth noble truth, classically stated as “The noble eightfold path leads to the cessation of *dukkha*,” with the four noble truths as the skillful path to wholeness. We start with this quote: “We are responsible for our own ignorance, or with time and open hearted enlightenment, our own wisdom.” This is Isabel Wilkerson from her book *Caste*. So they engage four noble truths. Practice offers us ways to respond to harm, how to return to wholeness with eight skillful aspects to practice with our mind, heart and body. The noble eightfold path is restorative by providing instructions and practices to develop skillful ways not to harm and also to avoid acting, or being part of conditions which promote harm and furthering harm, internally and externally, also teaches us how to rectify harm we've experienced or done.

We started out by taking the backward step and turning inward by starting with ourselves. That noble eightfold path starts with the wisdom aspect. Then it moves to instructions for how to interact in the world, and then gives us skillful means through meditation to do that, the Eightfold Path has eight aspects. They are skillful understanding or view, skillful thinking or thought or intention. That is considered the wisdom part of the eight. Then comes the part that's called that ethical conduct or I like to say that compassionate conduct, and that is skillful speech, skillful action, and skillful livelihood. The third grouping is called meditative aspects, and that is skillful effort, skillful mindfulness and skillful concentration.

Now, while these are broken up into three groupings, of course, they interpret relate to each other. And one way that I find very supportive in doing that, is to know that in the wisdom aspect, it is, what is our understanding of the world? What is our value? And what are our intentions with that? And then the meditative aspects are often considered the bridge, right? Where is it that in our meditation practices around effort on mindfulness and concentration, how does that support us to take our values into our interactions into how we behave within ourselves and with the world? So, they work together in that way.

So one analogy I like to share about these engage for noble truth is this. So the first remember that how is it that we know wholeness and so, we can see it as how is it that we can be in the in the elements you could say, right connected to air, earth, sky, connected to are the conditions of the natural world, this is the wholeness, so many of us returned to nature as a way of growing wholeness. So, the second noble truth can be seen as what are the walls that we've been given as how to like take up our space. And the foundation. So it builds us the structure that tells us it's us. We can understand that depending where you are different houses look differently. And often they are related to nature in many houses.



Like when I practice in Thailand, You know, the, the, your the Salah was a place in which you sat and meditated had no walls had a roof and had a floor. And, and so while practice is to be had shelter, it is also to be practicing in the conditions of the world. And yet many of us are taught that, you know, I need this wall and it needs to look like this. And then we're also taught what should go inside, right? And all the things that are around us, or how strong the roof should be in the foundation. And again, not that that's those are bad things. But when we get to the third noble truth, right? The quest is really to say, “This is the structure I find myself in. Does it does it meet my needs now? If I've moved, am I carrying the structure that no longer serves me?” And, and so it takes, you could say, a moment in which we awaken to is we awaken to, “I have a choice. In the kind of structure I build around myself. I have a choice and the kind of home I want to inhabit have a choice? Who inhabits it with me? And what's important? Is their music, what kind of music? What kind of plants? What kind of food to it?” Not just perhaps what I was taught as nutritious or what I should eat. But what what am I willing and what enlivens me and what feeds me nourishes me. Now, again, doesn't mean that you know, some of that comfort food isn't what's important. Now, it also is the willingness to perhaps stretch and try on different things.

Now, the fourth noble truth is the path. So the path versus what is the path to our structure? Right. So the path gives us really skillful ways to navigate. How we want to meet, what comes to us, is our door open is one of those walls that we have been taught or that we're building. Is that a door? Does it have a door in it, so that it can let things in and out. Also, internally, you know, we also take paths, right? For some of us, that path is to the refrigerator and back a lot, right, or perhaps to our desk to work and back a lot. So it also asks us to really examine what are skillful ways, right? And takes into the needs. Of course, we do need to work but is it is it skillful to perhaps stand at a standing desk or really big these days, because we know that just sitting still all the time doesn't nourish a body.

So the eightfold path gives us both a sense of an internal wellness inside our structure, our house, our home. And it asks us that we have a door that swings you could say, right that opens wide. And lets in and also helps us to get out and travel the path in a way that is skillful. So to go back to the net of Indra, to it as a sense of a spider web. I have been a nature and which when I look out, I see a strand just floating in the air like and I'm like where is the end as so long? That strand with the tiny little spider at the end, right? And it's just floating and I'm amazed by that. I'm amazed. Because it's hard for me to see, where's the starting point, and yet the spider, while connected to a sense of tradition of what's important, at some point, the spider jumps off into the wind into the air, and is carried, right with trust and faith in nature and the movement of the world. So that it can go find its own place to create its own net, to care for its own net, in a system of other nets often.

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So this is the liberatory aspect of practice, how is it that we can not reject what has come to us, really to investigate it in a very deep and meaningful way to really say what is important here to me and the people of my life, my community, the world itself, right, as it is now, how is it that this connection can be strengthened, and in what direction that we can take this so that the net supports us all. This is what I wish her us all a sense of groundedness and what is safe, and what is a value to us. And then to take it out and work together to strengthen, to care for to be stewards of the net that is supporting us all.

So it's been a delight to share these teachings of the engage four noble truths with you. For me, they give us aspirational values to connect us to our innate wholeness. And they provide us with clear, skillful ways to return to our individual and collective wholeness. When especially when we've experienced *dukkha*, hurt or harm. If anything I have said resonate for you. I'm so glad.

My trust and faith in the Buddha as an example, the dharma as medicine, and the sangha grows every day. Thank you for being part of this virtual sangha. This beyond place or time. I'm so glad to have travel on this path with you these weeks. And we really, we continue together. I like to end with these words from Pablo Neruda. In the midst of my struggles, I realize that my mission is to spread joy. Travel safe, and well my friends. See on the path.