

*Series 10, Talk 1*  
*Questions for Reflection*

Here are some ideas for your personal reflection during the week:

1) First: One of the reasons that in hearing the Dharma one should listen with one's whole being, is that Dharma isn't meant to be collected like knowledge. The Dharma contains teachings that we cannot grasp with our minds. If you listen to the Dharma with your body, especially in the zazen posture, it will penetrate according to your capacity to receive and you need not think more about it. Have you had an experience of this? If you haven't, these are just words. But if you haven't, you might be aware of that and next time listen to this or other dharma talks with single-minded attention, allowing the words of the talk simply to float through you.

2) Second: One of the take-aways from noticing yourself as you listen to the Dharma is the consciousness of the settled nature of your mind. Our culture instills movement, constant activity, a kind of drumming speed. We all take this in, sometimes as a prerogative. Noticing the quality of your mind as you listen to a dharma talk might help you see how much you personally have been affected by all this subconscious agitation.

3) Third: According to the story, after Bodhidharma left his interview with Emperor Wu, he went to Shoalin Mountain and sat in a cave for nine years waiting for his destined successor to find him. My impression is that there was a large monastery on Shoalin Mountain but Bodhidharma sat separately and alone focusing on zazen practice. It's the focus on zazen practice that makes him so important. Please try to stay focused on yours and incrementally improve it from time to time. Zazen is the heart of Zen. Dogen said zazen is the ONLY important thing. Let Bohidharma inspire you.

4) If you are among those who find it easier to listen to teachings rather than practice them, for now, why don't you take on the Practice of Mindfulness and notice yourself when you do this. For example, "I right now am reading about Buddhism or listening to a Buddhist talk even as I avoid sitting zazen, the main event of Zen." In zazen we neither learn anything nor get anything. In reading and listening we may do both. Please reflect on this fact as you are being increasingly mindful of your own tendencies.