

The Zen Commandments



SUGGESTED MEDITATION Rest in Openness

The following exercise can be found on page 13 of print editions of The Zen Commandments, and is the suggested format for meditation during study group meetings. Members can take turns leading each week. Be bold in breaking the sound barrier for the “Abhbs!” After an ample period of silence, close with a chime, a pleasant ring tone, or a simple “...and so it is, Amen.”

Pull your shoulders up to your ears and drop them. Settle into the seat — let it take all your weight. Because we’re so used to speeding along on the expressway of doing, we can start with a bit of breathing practice as a sort of deceleration lane, an off-ramp to nondoing.

Take a slow, full breath, hold it for a few moments, then let out a deep sigh, as if breathing out through all your pores, letting go of everything, all burdens and decisions, stress and distress: *Abbb!*

Do this a few times.

Then just sit. That’s all. Don’t try to concentrate on anything or feel a certain way. Don’t resist thoughts or pursue them; as they arise, just let them go. Simply continue to *be* — just relax and remain aware, naturally open, as you already are.

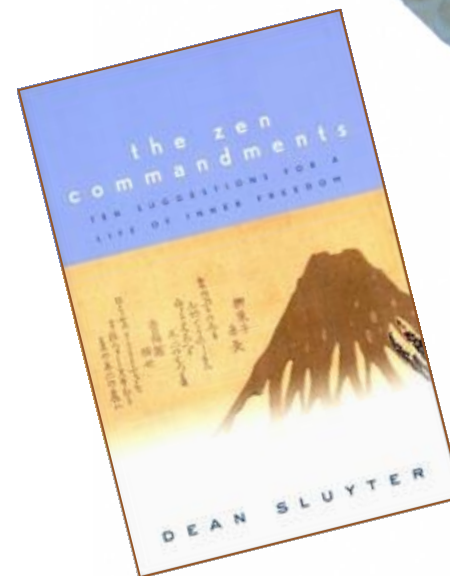
Simply *be*, now. In the silence...

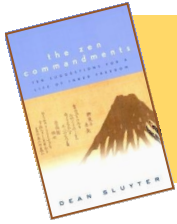


Adventures In Spirituality

Study Guide

Sept. 16 – Oct. 14, 2012





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Acknowledgements

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How do we bridge gaps among different perceptions, patterns of connections?

3. Sluyter asserts that if we don't disconnect the dots internally (meditation, singing, running), we're apt to pursue temporary external exits (booze, music, television). For each external "crutch" we use to "disconnect," identify an internal form that works as well or better for you.
4. Sluyter characterizes Gary Cooper in *High Noon* as mensch-like, demonstrating quiet, modest integrity while less noble characters create drama and trauma. Brainstorm more mensch-like attributes (conscientious, reliable, etc.). Imagine trying on these menschly ways. How might your life change if you were to become more mensch-like?
5. Think of "*Be a mensch and enjoy the joke*" as an invitation to work like a grown-up, play like a child. How do you balance work and play? What signals remind you to pay attention to both? What does play look like for you?

MEDITATION

Follow the *Abbh!* exercise reproduced on the back cover.

THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE

Practice being present to experiences and emotions without labels and judgment. Question the mind of duality that likes to categorize everything as good or bad and attaches meaning to events and circumstances. Exchange that activity for openness. Feel and experience life like a child might without suppression. (p.157)

CLOSING ROUND

CLOSING PRAYER

*The light of God surrounds us. The love of God enfolds us.
The power of God protects us. The presence of God watches over us.
Wherever we are, God is, And all is well. Amen.*



WEEK FIVE: Chapter 9 & 10

Momentum of Positivity

OPENING PRAYER

Gathering in gratitude, we celebrate this moment. Freed from conditioning, we experience the purity and wholeness of the world around and within us. The veil of separation lifts as illumination continues to have its way within our minds and our collective consciousness. Filled with peace and laughter, we give life the light touch and savor the sweet moments.

CHECK-IN ROUND

Each member shares whatever is most alive in his/her heart/mind: Insights from material, blessings from the day, reflections from last week's practice.

HOUSEKEEPING

Commitment to Home Book Study ground rules.

AFFIRMATION

Immersed in a field of infinite consciousness, I experience positive transformation from the inside out. My world is made new as I live freely, love abundantly, and expand mindfully.

DISCUSSION

Disconnect the Dots /

Be a Mensch and Enjoy the Joke

- Chapter 9 asks us to look long and hard at what makes this or that real. Does the Big Dipper exist or are the connection lines drawn in our minds? Do we construct reality? How do we determine truth?
- Sluyter notes, "Opinions are patterns of connection between perceived dots. When the dots fail to fit our pattern, we may even try to add, erase, or move a few as needed."

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Enrichment Circle Meeting Agenda

*Opening Prayer
Review of Ground Rules
Check-in Round
Weekly Affirmation
Discussion Questions
Meditation
Suggested Practice
Closing Round
Prayer of Protection*

Chart of Our Course

WEEK ONE: DIVING INTO LIFE'S STREAM

*Chapter 1: Rest in Openness
Chapter 2: Act with Kindness*

WEEK TWO: ECSTATIC YES, ECSTATIC NO

*Chapter 3: Notice the Moment
Chapter 4: Recognize Teachers*

WEEK THREE: CLEAR THE WAY AND COMMIT

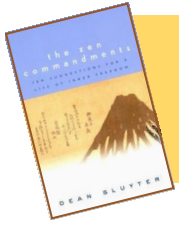
*Chapter 5: Keep it Simple
Chapter 6: Be Devoted*

WEEK FOUR: ASUMPTIONS & ADMIRATION

*Chapter 7: No Appointment, No Disappointment
Chapter 8: Bless Everyone*

WEEK FIVE: MOMENTUM OF POSITIVITY

*Chapter 9: Disconnect the Dots
Chapter 10: Be a Mensch and Enjoy the Joke*



The Commitment

Commitment transforms promise into reality. It is fueled by words that speak boldly of our intentions, and the actions which speak louder than words. It is making time where there is none. It is following through. It is the power that transforms our lives and our world. It is the daily triumph of integrity over skepticism.

- I commit myself to this process of spiritual exploration, of fulfilling my soul's longing to understand and express the divine to the best of my ability, with my thoughts, words and actions.
- I go to my heart, and invite other circle members to do the same, because I believe in the connecting power of God that dwells in the one heart of which we are all a part.
- I celebrate the greatness in myself and in you. Our lives are filled with infinite possibilities woven together in Oneness.
- I love and accept you just the way you are and I respect your right to be different and to think differently than I do.
- I am open to sharing my thoughts, feelings and beliefs authentically in our exploration of Truth. I love you and myself enough to share my personal experiences openly and to listen lovingly and intently to the truth you choose to share.
- I choose words of kindness, encouragement, appreciation and gratitude to build a strong foundation of mutual support as together we claim the perfect expression of our individual spiritual natures.

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3. When you listen deeply to your inner Self, what does your Life tell you about your appointments, divine or otherwise?
4. What would happen if you cancelled all of your "appointments?"
5. Share an experience of blessing or being blessed.
6. What practice might group members use to support each other in multiplying the awareness of blessings?
7. A favorite Unity blessing is "We love you, we bless you, we appreciate you and we behold God's love as you." One Buddhist blessing is, "May all beings be free from suffering." What other blessings do you resonate with?

MEDITATION

Follow the *Abbb!* exercise reproduced on the back cover .

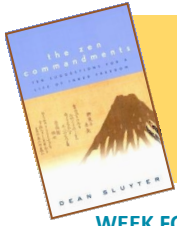
THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE

Practice goal-less-ness and useless action awareness (120-122). Consciously shift the "toward" or "meantime" experiences to an awakened experience of connecting with action and self in the present moment as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end. Make a phone call and have a conversation with no agenda, no purpose.

CLOSING ROUND

CLOSING PRAYER

*The light of God surrounds us. The love of God enfolds us.
The power of God protects us. The presence of God watches over us.
Wherever we are, God is, And all is well. Amen.*



WEEK FOUR: Chapter 7 & 8

Assumptions & Admiration

OPENING PRAYER

Centered in gratitude, we acknowledge this divine appointment. We are a unique, unrepeatable expression of the Divine gathered together by the spirit of Wisdom. We loose attachments and bask in the flow of life. Present to the all embracing impulse that guides and inspires, we are a living blessing to the all.

CHECK-IN ROUND

Each member shares whatever is most alive in his/her heart/mind: Insights from material, blessings from the day, reflections from last week's practice.

HOUSEKEEPING

Commitment to Home Book Study ground rules.

AFFIRMATION

Immersed in a field of infinite consciousness, I experience positive transformation from the inside out. My world is made new as I live freely, love abundantly, and expand mindfully.

DISCUSSION

No Appointment, No Disappointment/ Bless Everyone

1. Have you ever observed yourself doing a variation of the "pee-pee dance?" What does Sluyter mean by "relax within the discomfort?"
2. In Unity we affirm that everything in manifest form begins with thought. In the book, these and other Buddhist teachings tell us to empty our minds. How do you reconcile these seeming opposites?

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The Ground Rules

Ground rules help create a safe and healthy environment for the group. It is important that the group reviews these ground rules and reaches consensus prior to discussions.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Everything shared by group members is confidential. What is shared here, stays here.

COMPASSION

Group members relate to each other with unconditional, compassionate acceptance. Judgmental comments, even unspoken judgmental thoughts, threaten the group process.

TRUTH & INTEGRITY

Group members are encouraged and supported by one another honestly and authentically to be who they are. Speaking the truth involves risk and can only occur safely in a compassionate environment.

RESPECT

Group members show respect for each other and the group by not interrupting others or having side conversations, arriving on time, and allowing everyone to participate.

CONFLICT

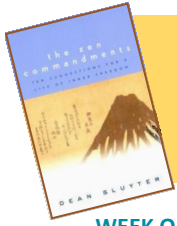
Whenever people come together and speak truthfully, the potential for hurt feelings, misunderstanding and conflict exists. If such a situation arises, group members agree to address it within the group process, or one-on-one with the facilitator. Unresolved conflict is toxic to the whole group and not just to the parties directly involved.

GROUP PROCESS

This process is for our own personal and spiritual growth, not group therapy. When sharing, group members are asked to use "I" statements and avoid trying to fix or solve.

PARTICIPATION

Group members agree to be prepared by reading the required chapters and to participate in discussion and group activities.



WEEK ONE: Chapters 1 & 2

Diving Into Life's Stream

OPENING PRAYER

Holy Spirit,, bless this gathering as we share our thoughts, insights and a-ha's. We now open our hearts and minds that we might deepen our understanding of God, ourselves and one another, and remember that the same divinity in each of us is in everyone, everywhere.

CHECK-IN ROUND

Each member shares whatever is most alive in his/her heart/mind: Insights from material, blessings from the day, reflections from Sunday's lesson.

HOUSEKEEPING

Commitment to Home Book Study ground rules.

AFFIRMATION

Immersed in a field of infinite consciousness, I celebrate my innate divinity. Peace expands within me as I live from the center of my being. Claiming my birthright, I live freely, love abundantly, and expand mindfully.

DISCUSSION

Rest in Openness/Act with Kindness

1. Sluyter suggests that Scarlett O'Hara's insatiability is not different from our own striving. How is Scarlett's hunger reflected in your current experience?
2. Look back over your personal encounters with busyness. What practices helped shift your energy from chaotic to orderly?
3. In Unity, a common metaphor describing our divinity suggests that, "We are in God as a wave is in the ocean." How does this compare with Sluyter's wave metaphor, and with your own understanding of Oneness?

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4. Sluyter quotes Thoreau on the four necessities: food, shelter, clothing & fuel. Is this still a livable standard for simplicity in today's world?
5. Sluyter tells us that we are built for devotion and poses the question to what or to whom will we be devoted? What for you is an appropriate object of devotion?
6. What does "the ordinary is the infinite" mean to you?
7. Sluyter equates devotion with surrender, "giving up all hope that the beloved will be this way or things will turn out that way." What are some ways of releasing our expectations and judgments?
8. In the book, the commandment against idol worship is brought up stating that "the most rigid images can be the ones graven in our minds, our fixed ideas of the way things are." How can we open ourselves to other possibilities?

MEDITATION

Follow the *Abhh!* exercise reproduced on the back cover .

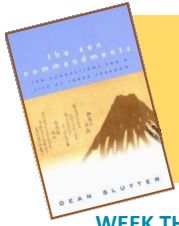
THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE

Pause each day this week to chant the universal sound Om. Review the mantras on page 105-107. Move through them multiple times, find one that resonates with you or write your own and practice it from memory throughout the week.

CLOSING ROUND

CLOSING PRAYER

*The light of God surrounds us. The love of God enfolds us.
The power of God protects us. The presence of God watches over us.
Wherever we are, God is, And all is well. Amen.*



WEEK THREE: Chapters 5 & 6

Clear the Way & Commit

OPENING PRAYER

Divine power blesses this gathering. We join together in our unity of purpose unfolding all that is ours to see, feel, hear and know. Fully present to this moment, we say “yes” to the divine invitation to expand our conscious awareness and practice of simplicity, power, and devotion.

CHECK-IN ROUND

Each member shares whatever is most alive in his/her heart/mind: Insights from material, blessings from the day, reflections from last week’s practice.

HOUSEKEEPING

Commitment to Home Book Study ground rules.

AFFIRMATION

Immersed in a field of infinite consciousness, I experience positive transformation from the inside out. My world is made new as I live freely, love abundantly, and expand mindfully.

DISCUSSION

Keep it Simple/Be Devoted

1. How do we simplify? What is our intention in each situation? What are some ways to reduce clutter?
2. What are the stories we build around our feelings about an event? How do we get stuck in our story?
3. How do our perceptions of another and ideas of how they should be affect the relationship? How do we speak our truth, as the author says, “gently and with respect?”

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4. The author says the key to unbusy-ing is dropping out, refreshing body and mind. Share a “Sabbath” practice to which you’re willing to commit as part of this 5-week journey.
5. We’re hard-wired for self-preservation, Sluyter asserts, but, he says, if we can imagine one scenario in which we would sacrifice our life for another, we’re capable of everyday altruism. For whom or what are you willing to die?
6. Unity seeks to awaken others to their own creative power, and we sometimes wrestle with whether an action is empowering or enabling. How do you distinguish between kindness that empowers and charity that perpetuates?

MEDITATION

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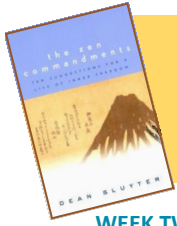
THIS WEEK’S PRACTICE

If you have an alarm on your watch or phone, set it to go off at odd intervals as a reminder to take an awareness break, at least for a few seconds. One teacher recommends 50-60 times a day. Pick a frequency that’s both do-able and a bit of a stretch.

CLOSING ROUND

CLOSING PRAYER

The light of God surrounds us. The love of God enfolds us. The power of God protects us. The presence of God watches over us. Wherever we are, God is, And all is well. Amen.



WEEK TWO: Chapter 3 & 4

Ecstatic Yes, Ecstatic No.

OPENING PRAYER

The infinite Spirit of Life, Love and Wisdom are everywhere present. As we tune into this truth, our gathering is alive with inspiration, awake with spiritual insights and grounded in principle. Present to this now moment, we acknowledge the spiritual teachers on our path and the sacred teachings that have led us to this moment.

CHECK-IN ROUND

Each member shares whatever is most alive in his/her heart/mind: Insights from material, blessings from the day, reflections from last week's practice.

HOUSEKEEPING

Commitment to Home Book Study ground rules.

AFFIRMATION

Immersed in a field of infinite consciousness, I experience positive transformation from the inside out. My world is made new as I live freely, love abundantly, and expand mindfully.

DISCUSSION

Notice the Moment/Recognizing Teachers

1. Sluyter makes the point that “any striving to improve can only be for the future for the present is ... what it is.” Reconcile this idea with our A) commitments to excellence at home, work, and the marketplace, and B) recognition that inner peace unfolds when we: *Notice The Moment*.
2. How has your capacity to “Notice The Moment” changed over time? Share a tried-and-true way to “stop and smell the flowers,” or redirect self from complaining in vain to appreciating and valuing now?

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3. How does the Zen teaching that *there's only one moment, which is perpetual, or we could say eternal*, compare with Unity's principle that *there is one power and presence, God the good, omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience*?
4. ISSO FUJITO advises, “There is no perfect teacher. The point is to make a sincere effort to become a perfect student of an imperfect teacher.” How might we UPDATE our efforts to *sincerely* recognize our teachers in the “Divine Appointments” which Unity so often affirms?
5. A Jewish book of wisdom (The Ethics of Elders) notes that when we learn just one thing from another, that person is considered our teacher. Explain how this connotation of “teacher” shifts your response to the title: *Recognize Teachers*.

MEDITATION

Follow the *Abbb!* exercise reproduced on the back cover.

THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE

Explore “The Length of Now” (p. 49) by consciously slowing down and speeding up time. Throughout the week, pause to slow your speech and enter a “slow motion” reality. Slowing eye and body motions, notice how your perception shifts. In addition, choose one activity such as eating a meal, going on a walk or doing a task in slow motion and report back to the group.

CLOSING ROUND

CLOSING PRAYER

The light of God surrounds us. The love of God enfolds us. The power of God protects us. The presence of God watches over us. Wherever we are, God is, And all is well. Amen.