So hello and welcome to this last talk on the Four Noble Truths; last talk. This, I guess is a 20th talk on this topic. And this can be kind of the concluding talk the summary talk or something. And I want to start then by bringing up a statement that the Buddha made that the Buddha teaches suffering and the end of suffering. And this very pithy way of really talking about maybe the essence of what the Buddha's teachings is about, kind of clears the air, clears at all to point to this the essential elements of what this is about. And it's one of the things that we can kind of keep in the back of the mind that all of the teachings of Buddhism, the practices of Buddhism, the way of life that Buddhism is supporting, is for this purpose, to come to the end of suffering, and of our unease that we might have or and of our distress and stress that we might have. And that with that, as a guideline, that principle as a guideline. We then practice and live and reflect on our lives. With that in mind, what I'm doing now, is that lead me to greater suffering, or does it bring me freedom from suffering, the end of suffering? Is this perspective I'm using now supportive to move to the end of suffering? Is this perspective, this understanding, this practice I'm doing, this activity that I'm doing, does it really help not just for the short term ending of suffering, but really the long term? And that's an important point because some people are just looking for relief. And relief is not the same thing as release. Relief is temporary, it just kind of getting back into comfort or comfort. It can even be escape from really looking deeply into our lives. The task of ending suffering requires us to look deeply into really be present for something, even the great difficulty we have. And if we're too quick to kind of avoid the suffering, the pain, the difficulties that of our lives, then there's not really, we're not really working for the long term ending of suffering. We have to really kind of be present. And so these four noble truths are the I think putting that at the center of Buddhism, I just really love because it's putting a very pragmatic purpose in the middle of Buddhism without the need for a lot of other beliefs. There's those no supernatural beliefs, no creed's and beliefs that you don't have to believe in, you know, that seemed kind of, you know, too foreign from what you were about. It's really it's putting at the center of it. It's something that most people can identify with. And most people can feel as, as a way forward or as a way of responding. That's not much different than if you have a thorn in your foot. You pull it out. That's a pragmatic, you know, if you feel the pain of the thorn, you pull the thorn out and that might be a little bit of pain at first to pull it out. But for long term well being, it's good to pull it out so doesn't, you know, dig in deeper. And so the Buddha talked about a thorn in the
heart. And that what he discovered with his awakening was that there's a thorn in the heart, and that thorn can be pulled out.

And so, you know, it's it's a, there's something that there's an activity, there's a something extra going on within us, that brings on the suffering, that we contribute to this thorn, and that it can be pulled out, we can come to the end of suffering. And I like to think of this as a very naturalistic form of religious life and that it really kind of orienting itself around to a very natural aspect of our felt experience to recognize we can recognize this in itself. You don't need a big book on Buddhism or a PhD in Buddhism to begin appreciating them when they're suffering and the absence of it, when there's unease, and when there becomes ease, and to use that as a guide, and to really look deeply. And these four noble truths are these four full perspectives, that help us with that task of looking at suffering and coming to the end of it. And it turns out that there are many different interpretations. Or maybe interpretations is maybe a little bit unfortunate explanation. Maybe rather than interpretations there are many perspectives that different teachers, different people use in this four foot framework, to help them look at the suffering and coming to the end of it. And these different applications, these different perspectives, and different people teach about, probably worked for them in some degree. And maybe they'll work for us in some settings in our lives, and certain times certain perspectives are more useful than others. And I've tried in this four week series to point out that there's out there part of the context for understanding, or the perspective for understanding the Four Noble Truths little bit depends on the state of our mind or where we are kind of engaged in our own ordinary life, that in a complex ordinary life of work and family or activities, or whatever we're doing, that the ordinary ordinary way of thinking is to look at cause and effect. And so, too, sometimes we really spent a lot of time Why did that happen? Why did that happen? And rather than saying, don't do that, that's completely appropriate sometimes and sometimes, very deep insight very deep relief, relief release. Healing can happen by understanding a cause. And some people journal, talk to friends, therapists, and really try to unpack what's goes on until they find some really core thing that they see as maybe the cause or the primary condition that needed to be somehow unraveled and worked out. So the idea have, that there's a cause of suffering. And then one of to help us out to really help point us to something that where we have some ability to do something about is to really look within ourselves. The are causes of suffering outside of us, but sometimes we can deal with them and address them. But sometimes we can't, but to really look at what am i contributing to this suffering of mine? What's my role in that being there? Even if 90% of the cause is external, and 10% internal, it's a very maturing, it's very liberating. It's a very deep learning process. To go look at that 10% not to ignore the 90% out there. But this is where that seed of awakening, a seed of very deep peace and maturation of wisdom can grow when we really look inside. And so the traditions in this perspective, will say, look at the craving, look at thirst, look at drivenness compulsion, where is that in the system and then let go of it, bring it to an end. And because it's difficult to do it, live a life that sets in place the conditions that allows you to become settled, clean enough to look deeply into what's going on here. So that's, you know, a little bit more than traditional understanding of the Four Noble Truths. The whole other perspective, which is really, really powerful current to the teachings of the Buddha is first is to look at the conditions. Look at the ecology, the landscape of suffering. And this is where as the mind becomes quieter and the mindfulness becomes stronger, we can take a wider look at what's going on. And so we're not just kind of caught up in cause and caught up maybe with me, myself, and mind; you over there and what you're doing. And we take it out of the realm of kind of over identification around self with this thing, and start seeing that there's a wider field of conditionality of conditions that are in play here. And we learn to work in that, engage in that world of conditions, shifting, moving, developing, letting go of conditions, and to help us with the overcoming of suffering.
And this is a part of the developing the Eightfold Path, putting in the conditions that support this deeper letting go of the causes of suffering. And then at a deeper level, the Buddha's the Buddha teaches a lot about, especially in meditation, that tremendous value of being very, very still, quiet, vibrant, kind of very, very clear mind and resting in this peaceful mind and allowing the stream, the river of life just to flow. So we see that inconstancy of experience, how it's constantly flowing and moving and arising and passing. And some of the deepest, maybe subconscious areas of holding on and clinging are best addressed. Not in the world of concepts, ideas, cause even conditions, but rather at this very primal level of experience. It's kind of the, the foundation of experience having to do with how moment to moment experiences flowing and moving. And, and any kind of suffering we have involves some some way other some attempt to try to stop, lock, hold on to, resist this flow of experience that goes on and to experience it and to experience that flow and then to let go more deeply. And the deepest letting go isn't this, you know, this deep, letting go in the field of inconstancy. And but to come to that quiet state of mind, where inconstancy can be that powerful of an impact is to us already to have let go of a lot be that still in quiet. So that so I'm offering that you know, I offer, kind of three different perspectives. There are many other perspectives that for this four noble truths, and, and I'll end with what I said at the beginning of the meditation, that we all have a capacity for freedom from suffering, from the suffering that we contribute to to the forces inside our own heart of conflict, of holding on of resistance, of fear, of greed and hatred, resentment, envy, all kinds of things conceal that we have, that, that we have a capacity for peace, for ease. And it exists, in essence originally perhaps, as a little seed. And that seed needs to be nourished and watered. And if that is seed is nourished and water and given the right fertile conditions, it will grow into a beautiful plant. And this idea that what's in us is there ready to grow and unfold and move points to a very positive view of human nature, human beings our potential, that there's something really good and wholesome and wonderful here waiting for us, a process of liberating process, a process that moves us to peace. And so part of it is to learn how to create a fertile ground for it, how to water it, how to make room for this plant to grow to get out of the way, how to let something which is a natural process move through us. That's distinct from our personal how to say it distinct from our personal efforts to make and do and accomplish and attain and acquire and all the kind of actions of the self. Which is certainly okay in some settings. But there's something which is deeper than self, or, you know, some people talks larger than self. But there's something within us that's not associated with the way what we identify as the self. That we define ourselves by that mostly we don't do, but we allow. This allowing of peace, the allowing of freedom from suffering, allowing the possibility to become free to happen is kind of the whole point of the Four Noble Truths. And in this ennobling freedom that we all can do. So that's the

that's these teachings in the Four Noble Truths. And then a few minutes, I'll take some questions if you have and, and try to answer and maybe for the next 15 minutes or so. And in the meantime, I'd like to say that yes, we're going to continue. I'm continuing next week with these early morning sittings. And I haven't decided on the theme for next week. I like to have a theme for the week. And if I can, I can tell you some ideas I have if you please don't commit me to it. I think the top of the list is to do five talks on what's called the seven factors of awakening. There were a request earlier that I teach about it. And the other is to do five talks on metta loving kindness. And sooner or later I'll do all of these but, but I'll do something. Next week starting Monday, that's, that's seven here in California. So

So how about the Eightfold Path? Yeah, so the Eightfold Path as a little bit what I talked about this week, is in one of the interpretations or one of the ways of understanding the the fourth noble truth. The fourth noble truth is defined by the Eightfold Path. And, and, but there are other interpretations or their perspectives of what the fourth noble truth is. The eightfold path, as the fourth noble truth is the
conditions that enable the cessation of suffering. And it's a beautiful path. And so certainly someday we could do a series of talks on the Eightfold Path. It would make sense to do that next week. I guess maybe that's what the question is about, you know, just follow up. And

so,

could you please say something about the killings of so many of our African American brothers and sisters by the police? How does the Dharma guide us in facing these situations? I think that The Four Noble Truths also apply in our society. And sometimes I like the idea of the Four Noble Truths. I don't have any I don't have any pronouns associated with them. So sometimes, what we want to do is actually turn our gaze and study the suffering in the world, and really look at it clearly be a witness to it. Sometimes the world needs us to be a witness for the suffering of the world to not turn away from it, and use our capacity to have some ease with what's tremendously painful to stay present and really see it and take it in and try to understand and it might mean that we, we have a heartbroken, I think my heart breaks regularly and what's happening with the killing of African Americans in this country is so more than heart breaking, it's just wrenching that this should happen. But to be willing to stay open and to feel that and to look at it and And to become wiser by it, and allow yourself to become different because of it. Allow yourself to become a better person. The more distressed you feel about what goes on in our society, the more important it is that you do something about it. It doesn't mean that you go to Minneapolis or something and talk to the police chief or whatever. It means that somehow and you in the way that your life is lived, that you learn. You learn something more about what's going on in our society so you can become changed. You do something that benefits people in this regard. I said, you know, it could be very small what you do, but if we don't, if we're not changed by the things that upset us, then I think we're probably not free. But to be willing to look at what's happening, be a witness to it, take our time with it, and then be changed. And try to be an agent of change for one way or the other. Many things we can beat we can do so. So I've been meditating for many years, while my concentration is improved, my mind still wander so much. And anxiety arrives, Is this normal? I think it's best to consider everything normal to normalize everything. Because then it's a bit easier to be at ease with it. And then seeing whatever is happening with you and meditation is normal. Then the question is, given this that's happening, what is the Why is what is a helpful way to go forward from here. And, and I'm happy that it concentration is improved over time. And so it might be that at some point when you're able to sit together quiet enough and concentrated enough, what needs your concentration is the anxiety itself. And so then some point when the mind wanders off, don't come back to the breath to get concentrated, turn your attention towards the suffering and towards the anxiety. And then anxiety might need you. And one of the things I like to teach is you want to help your anxiety feel safe, you want to be able to hold it in the palm of your awareness. And just to let it be safe and and not criticize not trying to fix it, not try to get rid of it because then the anxiety is going to feel even worse, but rather to hold it, be a witness to that and and see what happens and see what you can learn and see what it wants and really understand just by being with it, and sometimes anxiety and fear held that way, will reveal itself what's going on. And sometimes it'll just begin to relax. Finally, You know, I'm being held I'm being seen here.

So I'm trying to follow these in order. I can I think a little hard for me but this way maybe

Can you post that IRC oatmeal recipe on this site? I felt so taken care of it IRC. Well that's very sweet. Those of you who haven't been to IRC might not know it's the teachers who make the oatmeal in the morning at the retreats, we make teachers make breakfast and put it out. And, and so it's, you know,
our to our job to make the oatmeal and what's the recipe is I think it's a standard oatmeal recipe. The only difference maybe from what's the box says is Be sure to put a lot of love and mindfulness into it.

How do we know if we are practicing the right effort with right effort? Previously, I think I was straining too much. So now I'm wondering if I'm not going to easy, great question. This is the perfect question for finding the right effort. Everyone needs to find it for themselves. And thus, the question to ask is, am I straining like trying too hard? Or am I trying too little Am I complacent or too easygoing? And inevitably, people will swing back and forth between those two. Sometimes it's that extreme ends of them. The swing is but as practice goes deeper, it's narrower and narrower swings, but there's always little swings going on. And, and not that you're always looking at the question of what is right effort. Sometimes you're close enough, but then you kind of feel And so and so this idea of of suffer. tuning into suffering, tuning into unease is actually a very important help for meditation practice. Because if we become increasingly sensitive to where the unease is where the stresses where the discomfort is, sooner or later you'll feel the discomfort of trying too hard. And you'll feel a kind of discomfort, a dissatisfaction that comes with not trying enough. And in this way, we become our own teacher and we make little adjustments to find our way. I'm interesting and how to apply the Eightfold Path in everyday life. Wonderful. So I'm thinking about maybe one of these weeks to maybe spend time on the Eightfold Path and let's see

Yeah, so my,

and not relevant for today's talk. But is there a permanent part within, according to Buddha, like the padishah Atman, your view on reincarnation? Yeah, it's a very important and big part of I think some of the religions of India is to this idea that there's a permanent everlasting ockman or kind of like a soul. Sometimes it was translated itself within us. And so the Buddha was very interesting in that he was very pragmatic, in that he was really only looking at what we can really see for ourselves and need to see for ourselves to become free of suffering. And I would say he wasn't That interested in whether there is or is not a permanent self. But he did have a teaching called anata, not mine. And it isn't so much that there is no self, but rather in the world of experience, what we can actually directly know for the purpose of liberation. Nothing in our experience is that self is that permanent self. If there is a permanent self beyond the realm of experience, I think the Buddha would have said, it's not really that relevant. And so it wasn't really of interest for him. And so, with respect for other religions that do emphasize that, then we could look more carefully at those religions and see that there's a lot of similarities and a lot of ways in which these two different traditions, in some ways are not that different. Even though one pauses one thing and one pauses and other they're all looking towards liberation and all have to work. Through many of the same issues to get to the what they think is a liberated state.

We become the ripples in the stream.

Appreciate all these comments and this connection to all of you and it makes it very rich to sit here and and try to teach and feel connected to you. How can we best support you and your practice? Ah, well, that's very nice to ask just you're asking that makes a difference for me. I think that I think I just am supported by the people who practice and if you practice Sincerely that inspires me and supports me and will support many, many people. That's really the best way that can be supported.

Is there a book from Bhikkhu Bodhi that you recommend? Oh, I think just about everything that Bhikkhu Bodhi is worth very, very much worthwhile reading. He's a great thinker, and I use this translations a lot
and, but his commentary on the suttas, his commentary in Buddhism, his reflection, he's a wonderful thinker and wonderful practitioner and really sweet, kind man. And so I think that it's all unique, so always useful to read Bhikkhu Bodhi

How can the Buddha help me lose weight? Yeah, there's a there's apparently a king in time of the Buddha. They were kind of friends. Pesenti, who apparently was overweight and the Buddha seems to have given him some advice, but I don't know what that is. And I quite, it's in the suttas, I don't know quite where it is. But the, you know, the hopefully mindfulness and concentration in the senior practice that we do, helps us to have the right attitude and the right approach and right discipline for whatever is needed in terms of weight, whether it's losing weight or whether it's learning to be at ease with the weight that we have.

So So okay, so I'm sorry if I miss some of the questions here, but it's that time to end, and so thank you and I feel very fortunate to have the chance to kind of unfold these teachings on the Four Noble Truths in the way I did. I hope it's clear enough and helpful enough for this. And, and for some of you who don't know much about this, maybe it's a nice beginning to reflect a little bit about this very important Buddhist teaching. So, thank you. Thank you. Thank you and I look forward to perhaps seeing many of you again on Monday. Bye bye.