So in introducing generosity as part of the meditation today I'm beginning a series of talks on these mornings on the 10 Pāramīs. The Pali word is pāramī and in Sanskrit it's pāramitās. And these are really rich and beautiful and important qualities of heart that develop as we practice. And I've been using we've been using them for the last 15 years or so, as the reference point for offering spiritual care in a training we have here in a Buddhist chaplaincy training. So we train people to be hospitals and hospice and prison chaplains and we use this as part of the framework for looking at the compassion and liberation that goes into Buddhist spiritual care. In fact, the 10 things 10 qualities that are the pāramīs, often called in English the perfections, are that which is ultimate is, that what makes them pāramīs is that they're intimately connected to the human capacity for compassion, and the human capacity for liberation, and liberating the heart.

And, so generosity is the first one. And many people in the world are generous. It's a wonderful thing to be. And when generosity comes out of or supports or is part of the path of greater compassion and greater liberation, then it is a pāramī. So there's Ordinary generosity which, and there's a generosity that is infused or informed by compassion and liberation. And that's where the 10 pāramīs are. And so the 10 are generosity, ethical behavior, renunciation, wisdom, energy or engagement and patience and truth, truthfulness, resolve, loving kindness, and equanimity.

So, over the next two weeks each day each morning, I'll take one of those 10. Now, what's nice about this also, and is that these 10 are a different description of the path of practice, that they kind of, it's a way of understanding how practice can involve, doesn't have to evolve. Evolves sequentially, kind of one gets stronger than the next gets stronger, the next get stronger. So by the time we get to the last one equanimity, there's no possibility of thinking about equanimity being some kind of cold indifference, because it's really built on this foundation of all the other nine pāramīs, which are these strengths that we develop. And then you feel that equanimity is a strength that's built on wisdom and determination and truthfulness and loving kindness and the others.
And so it begins with generosity. And in many ways, the Buddha taught, the path of practice can be seen to begin with generosity, or generosity is a wonderful foundational practice for Buddhism. And one of the reasons why generosity is so rich and valuable is that generosity, if that's the beginning of the path of practice, it puts our practice in the context of our interpersonal lives, our lives with other people and even other living beings. Rather than if we start with meditation, it's very easy to get the message that the foundation, the beginning is ourselves, which is nothing wrong to begin there. But it can only lead to being a little bit, sometimes askew with emphasizing excessive individualism or certain kind of conceit about myself and my own experience. But to begin with generosity, it clearly begins with the formation or the or the foundation of healthy interpersonal relationships. And to have our practice built on that and our relationship with the world is, I think, a wonderful lesson and wonderful reference point for doing the more individualistic work of my meditation itself.

The other thing that's nice about generosity, really emphasized at the beginning, as I said, it's really connected to compassion and liberation. And especially with compassion there's not a few people who tend to relate to compassion, with a sense of obligation. It's kind of a duty to be compassionate, and that we're supposed to be and we have to be. And some people really are really central to their understanding of how to be a human being. And a good human being, is a sense of obligation of living up to the obligation what we're supposed to do, and it can be almost frightening, disturbing, upsetting to remove that sense of obligation from the orientation in which they live their lives. So maybe this has a little bit to do with how we understand the word obligation or duty, responsibility. But when we start with generosity, generosity is always voluntary. You can't be generous if it's not a voluntary act. You can give with attachment, you can give reluctantly, but to be generous, it's a voluntary act of openness, of abundance, of letting go, of granting, and it can't be obligatory. And so, it comes out of some wellspring inside of health, of goodness, of openness, of connectedness, that sometimes is discovered as we sit and meditate and stay in the present moment and let go of all the attachments all the crusts of resistance and defensiveness and greed and fear that we have It just begins to shed and relax. And this natural feeling of wanting to care for someone, be generous to someone in the ordinary simple way begins to become stronger and stronger.

To emphasize generosity in the beginning is to really point back to that possibility and that, that place of goodness that we have, and it's very important to appreciate that it's not an obligation. So we have to feel our way or make space for take the time for do the, the, it's almost like if you like obligation, we have an obligation to find how to be generous without obligation. And so then spiritual cares, caring for others and all kinds of different ways. With compassion comes from this feeling of me. I don't know if abundance was the right word from this freedom. It's our freedom that's expressed in generosity. And not our contractedness and our heaviness, weight of responsibility.
And so part of the practice then of generosity is to stretch ourselves maybe as a practice to be generous, but not to stretch ourselves with duty, but stretch yourself with, can we find this freedom, can we find the liberation of heart that allows generosity to flow as a kind of a natural quality, kind of something we're inspired to do. That flows almost like, out of ease and out of goodness and out of you know, it's a simple thing. A obvious thing, of course, I want to be generous. And so to explore that edge and look at the places where we don't want to be generous. Where we hold back, we're afraid to be generous. We're just simply too preoccupied with our own concerns to be generous. And see what does it mean to start living with greater generosity? And what is it like to open more and more?

And one of the ways that it's like, surprisingly, these wonderful kind of way in which we sometimes feels like we receive more than we give, the more we're generous, the more life can be experienced as a gift, the more we're actually available for the gifts that life has to give, that it's symbolic for me with the idea that if we hold something in our hand, and to make a hold of tight in a fist, that's one way of living. But in order to give what we have in our hand to someone else, we have to open our hand up so they can have it. But once our hand is open, the hand is available for other things to happen. It's available for the gifts of life. If we stay fisted, we don't really have a sense of the, we're not really available for what life has to give. And life is always supporting us and here in a way.

So generosity as the foundation of this journey of the pāramīs. And I hope that as we go through these 10 part series that you might kind of participate by spending the day each day focusing little bit on these qualities. So for today, or the next 24 hours, wherever you are, to make generosity kind of a theme. You might want to write it down, carry it with you, or you know, just somewhere so you're reminded by it and just kind of explore and stretch and talk to your friends about generosity and maybe do some simple reading about it in books or in the web, just kind of little ideas and kind of live with it and feel your way into it and review and reflect on your own relationship to generosity and the each day to do that with these different qualities, and maybe you start getting a sense of the momentum of how they build one on top of the other.

And hopefully, this building of something that is non obligatory that arises from some feeling of generosity, of liberation, of freedom, of being non attached, non clinging, and our compassionate, caring, connections connectivity to the world around us. That our gift that we receive from our world you in fact, the love and the care that we can also give to the world. It's all mixed together, generosity and receiving in a rich way.

So I look forward to these days on the pāramīs and I'll fill you in more about what they're about as we go along here. So thank you very much for today.