



ENGLISH DHARMA GROUP * JADE BUDDHA TEMPLE

Welcome to the English Dharma Group (EDG) at Jade Buddha Temple

The English Dharma Group was formed in 1991 to make Buddhism accessible to English speaking people. The group is part of the Texas Buddhist Association (TBA), a non-profit organization, founded in 1979. TBA aims to make the Dharma (teachings) known and welcomes all to its Sangha (community of like-minded, studying and following the Dharma). It adheres to Buddha's teachings and seeks to better the welfare of all by promoting compassion and loving-kindness taught by the Dharma. Under the leadership of committed monks and nuns and passionate lay practitioners, TBA has grown from a small Buddhist temple into Jade Buddha Temple (built in 1989), and the American Bodhi Center (515 acres retreat center, located northwest of Houston).

The English Dharma Group is open to newcomers and seasoned practitioners alike. Sit quietly in contemplation and meditation, engage in lively conversations, follow the Dharma talk, become a member of the volunteer team and/or ask us questions, the choice is yours. When entering the hall, place your shoes in the shoe rack. If meditation has started, enter the hall quietly to not disturb others. If you would like to receive weekly updates, sign up on our website at edg.jadebuddha.org.

Sunday Program in Kwan Yin Hall (small hall in the rear of the Temple)

10:00am Meditation: 30 minutes sitting

10:30am Dharma Talk & Discussions & Activity Announcements

Practical Buddhism by monastic, experienced outside speakers, and seasoned EDG members.

11:30am Vegetarian Lunch. Free for first time visitors. \$7.00 for a lunch box

Other Activities and Programs

- Half-day Saturday meditation retreat at the American Bodhi Center, contact 979-921-6969 (ABC Office) or 713-377-3394 (Daisy)
- Saturday Online Meditation & Book Study, contact vsmg.mgr@gmail.com
- Sunday evening Online Nikāya Reading Group, contact nikaya.mgr@gmail.com
- Meditation retreats throughout the year at the American Bodhi Center, <https://www.americanbodhicenter.org/>
- Various Buddhist and Chinese ceremonies and celebrations in Grand Hall
- Miscellaneous activities and programs announced throughout the year in our weekly newsletter and website
- Website: edg.jadebuddha.org
- Sign up to receive EDG Weekly Newsletter: <https://edg.jadebuddha.org/get-involved/newsletter-sign-up/>



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Frequently Asked Questions

Who was the Buddha? The Buddha was born as Siddhartha Gautama in Nepal around 2,600 years ago. He did not claim to be a god or a prophet. He was a human being who became Enlightened, understanding life in the deepest way possible. His insights spread throughout Asia and have slowly found its way to the Western World.

What does the word 'Buddha' mean? The literal meaning is 'awakened.' It stands for the awakened state when one has finally woken up to the truth becoming enlightened.

What did the Buddha teach? Even though his teachings stretched over 45 years, it is all fundamentally contained within the **Four Noble Truths**: the existence of dissatisfaction, the cause of dissatisfaction, the cessation of dissatisfaction, and the path to liberation from dissatisfaction through the Eightfold Path. We suffer from dissatisfaction when life goes against us, our hopes are destroyed, or tragedy strikes. We can even suffer when life does go our way. Why? We fear loss of what we have gained: pleasure, wealth, family and friends.

What are The Five Precepts? The 5 Precepts are the most basic code of ethics for lay Buddhists. By maintaining the Precepts one is training oneself to behave as a Buddha would. Having understood that killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, and intoxication only lead us to harm ourselves and others now and, in the future, we want to avoid these. By observing precepts, not only do we cultivate our moral strength and energy, but we also perform the highest service to our fellow beings.

What is the Eightfold Path? Within the Four Noble Truth is found the guide to end dissatisfaction: the Noble Eightfold Path. The eight factors of the path to liberation are grouped into three essential elements of Buddhist practice: Moral Conduct (Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood); Concentration (Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration); and Wisdom (Right Understanding, Right Thought). It takes determination and great effort to follow this path that leads to happiness, peace, and enlightenment.

Is there a God in Buddhism? The Buddha didn't endorse any views on creation. Rather, Buddhism emphasizes the system of causal relationships underlying the universe which constitute the natural order. No dependence of phenomena on a supernatural reality is asserted in order to explain the behavior of matter. Based on his own experience, the Buddha saw that each human being had the capacity to purify the mind, develop infinite love and compassion and perfect understanding. He encouraged us to find solutions to our problems through self-understanding.

What is Karma? Karma means action, work or deed and is the law that states every cause has an effect, i.e., our actions have results. This simple law explains a number of things such as inequality in the world. Karma underlines the importance of all individuals being responsible for their past and present actions. How can we test the karmic effect of our actions? The answer is summed up by looking at the intention behind the action, and effects of the action on oneself and on others.

What about meditation in Buddhism? Regardless of tradition, meditation is the principal tool through which the Buddha's realizations become our own. Sitting meditation is a blossoming awareness beneath the chattering of our everyday thoughts. It is practiced by sitting quietly and remaining conscious of the body's breath (without altering the breath in any way), and by noticing subtle changes in the mind and body.



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Kalama Sutta

The Buddha's teachings on judging truth are described in the Kalama Sutta. The Kalama Sutta (or Sutra) is found in the oldest Buddhist scripture, the Pali Canon (in the Anguttara Nikaya, which is part of the Sutta-Pitaka).

The sutta starts off by describing how the Buddha passes through the village of Kesaputta and is greeted by its inhabitants, a clan called the Kalamas. They ask for his advice: they say that many wandering holy men and ascetics pass through, expounding their teachings and criticizing the teachings of others. So whose teachings should they follow?

The Buddha proceeds to list the criteria by which any sensible person can decide which teachings to accept as true. The Kalama Sutta states:

- Do not go upon what has been **acquired by repeated hearing**,
- nor upon **tradition**,
- nor upon **rumor**,
- nor upon **what is in a scripture**,
- nor upon **surmise**,
- nor upon an **axiom**,
- nor upon **specious reasoning**,
- nor upon a **bias towards a notion that has been pondered over**,
- nor upon **another's seeming ability**,
- nor upon the consideration, "**The monk is our teacher**." [*emphasis added*]
- Kalamas, when you yourselves know: "These things are good; these things are not blamable; these things are praised by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to benefit and happiness," enter on and abide in them."

Thus, as stated by Soma Thera, the Kalama Sutta is just that; the Buddha's charter of free inquiry:

“ The instruction of the Kalamas (Kalama Sutta) is justly famous for its encouragement of free inquiry; the spirit of the sutta signifies a teaching that is exempt from fanaticism, bigotry, dogmatism, and intolerance. ”

However, as stated by Bhikkhu Bodhi, this teaching is not intended as an endorsement for either radical skepticism or as for the creation of unreasonable personal truth:

“ On the basis of a single passage, quoted out of context, the Buddha has been made out to be a pragmatic empiricist who dismisses all doctrine and faith, and whose Dhamma is simply a freethinker's kit to truth which invites each one to accept and reject whatever he likes. ”



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Suggested Readings | Buddhism and Teachings

In the Buddha's Words – An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon by Bhikkhu Bodhi

The Heart of Buddha's Teaching by Thich Nhat Hanh (New York: Broadway Books, 1998)

Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness by Ven. Henepola Gunaratana (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001)

What the Buddha Taught by Walpola Rahula (New York: Grove Press, 1986)

What Buddhists Believe by K. Sri Dhammananda (Houston Texas Buddhist Association)

The Buddha and His Teachings by Narada Mahathera

In This Very Life by Sayadaw U Pandita (Buddhist Publication Society, 1992)

Loving Kindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness by Sharon Salzberg (Shambhala Classics)

Purity of Heart by Ven. Thanissaro - Collection of essays. Includes: Purity of Heart, Untangling the Present, Pushing the Limits, All About Change, The Roots of Buddhist Romanticism, Right & Wrong Reconciliation, The Integrity of Emptiness, A Verb for Nirvana

The Autobiography of Phra Ajaan Lee Phra Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo was one of the foremost teachers in the Thai forest ascetic tradition of meditation founded at the turn of the twentieth century.

Suggested Readings | Meditation

Mindfulness in Plain English by Ven. Henepola Gunaratana (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1992).

Insight Meditation: The Practice of Freedom, by Joseph Goldstein (Shambhala Publications, Incorporated, 1993)

Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond by Ajahn Brahm (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2006)

With Each & Every Breath by Ven. Thanissaro A Guide to Meditation. Thanissaro Bhikkhu drawing on two sources: the Buddha's own set of instructions on how to use the breath in training the mind, and Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo's method of breath meditation — which builds on the Buddha's instructions, explaining in detail many of the points that the Buddha left in condensed form.

Source of materials (http://www.dhammatalks.org/ebook_index.html)

For more resources including free downloads and video recordings, check out our website at edg.jadebuddha.org or contact us at jadebuddhatx@gmail.com