

Master and Dog

From a question and answer session at Berlin Zen Center, April 2011.

Question: One thing is very clear to all beings on this planet: they will disappear in the next 150 years, at most. The question is: What is important, keeping in mind we all die? When I am angry or sad or something, inside me it is very strong, and then a little later this knowledge appears: I am dying. Then everything looks unimportant. And this question remains: What is really important to do? But this question disappears when I feel easy and relaxed. Then it is OK, nothing is too much and nothing is missing. But when I start thinking, I always ask myself: What is really important in this life? So my question is: What is important?

Zen Master Wu Bong: That is up to you. What do you want?

Q: I want to know: Who am I? And I ask this question all the time, and still I don't know, and maybe I will die before finding the answer.

ZMWB: So if that is really the most important thing, then do everything for that.

Our life—we decide. The name for that is vow. You decide: make a vow. If this vow is deep and strong, then naturally everything in your life will start to support this vow. You know this shepherd dog: this dog likes to run all over the place. This is like our mind also running here and there. But the master is going straight. Then the dog still runs here, there, here, there, but always also going straight. So, you make a strong vow, then no matter how crazy your life is, everything will go with that, in that direction.



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So don't ask me what is important. This is your job. And if somebody does not know, that is no problem. Then that is your job to find out.

Question: If this master has no clear direction, then it is not the master walking the dog but the dog walking the master. So, how to become the master and not the dog?

ZMWB: Be the dog, no problem! Become dog, OK? If you think "I want to be the master," then you make "I," you make "master," also you make "dog." All this talk, master, dog, and so on, this is all teaching speech; it is all thinking. If you heed this thinking, then you will have more headache.

All this talk is just pointing to something. So don't catch the words; catch the point. Otherwise, you become like a dog chasing after a bone.

Thank you for your questions. I just want to say, even if Buddha came here and gave you the most perfect answers, it is really useless unless you apply these in your life. So the most perfect medicine is just garbage unless you take it. All these answers had one point, and that point was to return to your practice. Always returning to great question. So I hope you use this answer in your life, everybody. Thank you very much. ♦