

Mind Cures

Question: Can my Buddhist name be picked by my guiding teacher instead of just going by the list?

Zen Master Wu Bong: In Zen we don't like special that much.

Question: What is beyond all doubt?

Zen Master Wu Bong: What color is the floor?

The same student asked, ten years later:

Q: What is "every perverted view," in the Heart Sutra?

ZMWB: What color is the mat?

Q: Gray.

ZMWB: So that fixes every perverted view.

Question: I would like to be more sure of myself. Can you tell me what I can do?

Zen Master Wu Bong: That means your center is not strong enough. So do a thousand bows a day.

Q: A thousand bows? How can I do it? I have a child and no time to do this!

ZMWB: It is only two hours a day.

Question: What do you do while sitting in the dharma hall?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Just sitting.

Q: But do you also have a kong-an to resolve?

ZMWB: Yeah, I have a kong-an. *[Staring at some paper.]*

Q: How to fill out this application form?

ZMWB: Yeah.

Question: When I am meditating and something appears, should I try to look deeper into it?

Zen Master Wu Bong: No, that is not the correct way. You should look deeper into don't know. What is it that is experiencing this?

Question: How can we go beyond life and death?

Zen Master Wu Bong: We are life and death.

Question: What do you think about euthanasia?

Zen Master Wu Bong: People always want something.

Question: Sometimes I come to practice regularly but other times I don't come. Why is that?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Ignorance.

Question: When can we call a human being a bodhisattva?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Any time you like.

Question: A lot of terrible things happen in the world. Who is responsible?

Zen Master Wu Bong: You are.

Question: How many precepts do you have?

Zen Master Wu Bong: One.

Question: How can I know what is the best thing to do?

Zen Master Wu Bong: What are you doing right now?

Question: What is the meaning of your Zen stick?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Come closer . . . If you want to find out, you have to come closer!

Question: How can one take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha?

Zen Master Wu Bong: What are you doing just now? *[Student hits the floor.]* Is that all?

Q: I am sitting on this cushion, talking to you.

ZMWB: Wonderful. That is taking refuge.

Question: What is your advice to someone like me who thinks about watching a movie when eating, and when watching a movie thinks about the girls?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Don't waste your time.

Question: Have you ever been in love?

Zen Master Wu Bong: I still am.

Question: One of our oldest members decided to stop practicing and coming to the Zen Center . . .

Zen Master Wu Bong: And if this man dies tomorrow, then what?

Question: I don't like kong-ans. That is why I come so rarely to interviews.

Zen Master Wu Bong: If you don't like kong-ans, then you must drop dead.

Q: I don't understand.

ZMWB: A kong-an is not special. Any of your everyday life situations is already a kong-an. If you don't like kong-ans, you don't like life.

Question: Aaaaaahhhhhhhggggggg! *[Student grabs his neck, shouting.]* Give me the money!

Zen Master Wu Bong: How much do you need?

Question: Why did the Buddha give many more precepts to nuns than to monks?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Women are much more high class than men and they are able to keep more precepts than us.

Question: I am unhappy with my American teacher, but I am not sure if I should break off with him. What do you



advise? If I end the relationship with him, will you be my teacher?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Don't attach to the teacher.

Question: I have trouble deciding things.

Zen Master Wu Bong: I have a secret technique which I've been teaching for several years now. Take a coin and throw it up in the air. By the time you catch it, you usually know what way you want it to come up. You don't even have to look. Just do it!

Question: How can one be Buddha and not be Buddha?

Zen Master Wu Bong: What is Buddha?

Q: I have no idea.

ZMWB: That's correct. That's Buddha.

Question: How do we stop thinking?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Don't try to stop thinking. Thinking is never a problem. Only if you are attached to your thinking it becomes a problem. So, simply don't attach to thinking—then your thinking becomes truth.

Question: Is Zen simple or is it complicated?

Zen Master Wu Bong: What is Zen? *[Student claps loudly.]* Only that?

Q: Sitting here listening to you.

ZMWB: Is that simple or complicated?

Question: How can we all together at the same time get enlightenment?

Zen Master Wu Bong: What color is this floor?

Q: Brown.

ZMWB: Yes, for me the floor is brown too.

Question: You have this wonderful, clear don't know mind, but what use is it?

Zen Master Wu Bong: How can I help you?

Q: Good question. How can you help me?

ZMWB: What do you need?

Q: Huh! I need a clear don't know mind like you. Can you help me with that?

ZMWB: What are you?

Question: I try to keep my don't know mind always, but I fail a lot. I try to come back to it again and again, but it's not easy. So, how can I keep myself full of that don't know mind only?

Zen Master Wu Bong: You want to keep don't know mind. That's the mistake. Don't keep anything. Just use your great question and you will naturally return to don't know.

Question: I read somewhere that great enlightened masters are reborn 49 days after their death in order to continue their job of bodhisattvas helping all beings. Is this true? How long does it take to be reborn after death? What is the rule for great masters?

Zen Master Wu Bong: $1+1 = 2$

Question: When a Zen master gives transmission, what is it?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Transmission is a tale for fools!

Q: *[Stares incredulously.]*

ZMWB: But when you become 100 percent fool, I'll give you transmission.

Question: You said once that a woman cannot be a Zen master.

Zen Master Wu Bong: *[Silent.]*

Q: Why? Why can't a woman be a Zen Master?

ZMWB: A man cannot either.

Question: It seems like, on the whole, good people practice Zen.

Zen Master Wu Bong: Only bad people practice Zen. And the worst of the worst become Zen masters!

Question: Please teach me how to sit.

Zen Master Wu Bong: You are sitting already.

Q: No! Please teach me to sit correctly.

ZMWB: The body is not important. It's important how you keep your mind when you sit.

Question: What is Buddha?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Who is asking?

The student said nothing. The next day, the same student asked:

Q: What is Buddha?

ZMWB: You already understand.

Question: Can a person who is dead practice?

Zen Master Wu Bong: No body, not possible to practice.

Question: How can we get rid of our expectations?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Just don't do it.

Question: What is fear?

Zen Master Wu Bong: When you want something.

Question: What is the cure for lazy mind?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Suffering.

Question: How can I know if I have got direction?

Zen Master Wu Bong: You can decide. Then do it.

Question: What is the function of a bodhisattva teacher in the Kwan Um School of Zen?

Zen Master Wu Bong: It is up to you. You decide.

Question: I don't understand how Zen and compassion—helping others—go together.

Zen Master Wu Bong: Without compassion there is no Zen. Compassion is what it is all about.

Zen Master Wu Bong: When the Buddha was dying, his student Ananda was upset and worried what would happen to all the students when the teacher was gone. The Buddha told him that already the students had dharma and, very importantly, they had each other. *[And he ended our retreat with a smile.]* ♦