

MIRACLE CURE AT KRIPALU?

Spirituality & Health

The Soul/Body Connection™

FIND YOUR AVATAR

The Safe Path to
a Spiritual Teacher

4 AWAKENINGS *to* COMPASSION

Why build a
Stone Circle

ZENVESTING
Financial Freedom



**WHEN
IT'S TIME
FOR DAD
TO GIVE UP
THE KEYS**



Who Is More Free?

Two recent conversations got me thinking about “freedom.” First, an old friend called to say that he was in town and to tell me about his divorce. My friend said that he was flat broke. “She can just have it all” was his attitude, and her lawyer was happy to comply. What he did get, he said, was his clothing, his mother’s china, his 15-year-old F-10 pickup — and no debts.

“Paul,” he said, matter-of-factly, “my truck broke down three times on the way up here. One sunset along the ocean, it broke down, and I just went down and sat in the sand, watching the sunset.” He went on, “You know, Paul, I found God. As I sat there on the beach, a feeling came over me. I forgave my ex. I started forgiving myself. I felt this big release . . . and I am happy. Not a penny to my name, but I am happy.”

My friend can fix boats and is licensed as a boat captain. He is personable, can tend a bar, and has rough-necked on oil rigs in 100-degree weather. So he will be okay. He can always find work. The line that stuck with me, however, was this: “I don’t need much. Took me ’til 50 to figure that out!”

Buddhism is not a religion that rejects wealth. Buddhist history is full of wealthy and powerful kings and merchants who built temples, helped the poor, supported the dharma, and used their power and wealth wisely and with good, thoughtful intention.

But the Buddha also lists specific ways of gaining wealth that are contrary to Buddhist morality. As written in the Sigalovada Sutta, the six ways are:

1. Devious or tricky ways
2. Ill-timed ways
3. Sloppy ways, or ways that use alcoholic beverages [I would add drugs, junk food, meat, and tobacco products.]
4. Ways that depend on evil companions
5. Ways that depend on prostitution
6. Lazy and slothful ways.

Is it better to have nothing but a broken-down truck to your good name or to be wealthy and full of guilt?

The second conversation was much shorter. A friend introduced me to a young man who had spent most of his career selling mortgages to “people who, in many cases, would not be able to pay them back.” He quit when it finally dawned on him that his actions were terribly destructive.

So here’s a question: Is it better to have nothing but a broken-down truck to your good name or to be wealthy and full of guilt? Who is more free?

The Buddha’s Samyuktagama Sutra speak specifically and eloquently about wealth: When you begin in a trade or profession, It is appropriate to accumulate wealth. Once you have accumulated wealth, You should divide it into four parts; One part to use for daily necessities, Two parts to be used by your profession, One part to be saved in case of unexpected need.

In his book *Being Good: Buddhist Ethics*

for *Everyday Life*, Venerable Master Hsing Yun states: “The heart of Buddhist morality is intention. If our intentions are good, we will be able to benefit others. If our intentions are not good, whether we are wealthy or poor, we will be a negative influence on the world.”

The Buddha spoke of other divisions of wealth. In the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, he suggests taking wealth and dividing it into four parts:

1. Family and parents
2. Others who are dependent on us (employees and such)
3. Relatives and friends
4. To support the dharma and monastic community.

We are all unique in our needs, family structure, life situation, skills, net worth, and emotional needs. The use of our income and the wealth that we accumulate should, at its core, be stewarded with intention, taking into account the complexity of our life and our personal goals, needs, and wants. Our skills, our work, and our wealth provide

us with freedom . . . but it is better to sleep on the bed of a truck than to be filled with guilt if the wealth comes from any of the six immoral ways.

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