



EPISODE 6

LETTING GO WITH THE ACTOR-BUDDHIST

Programmanus

Intro Music

NARRATOR

This show was recorded when the world was a bit different.

Sound of a plane flying

NARRATOR

You could easily fly to the US, hug strangers and you didn't hesitate to share a can of soda.

Sound of a can of soda being opened

NARRATOR

You're listening to Preach Shorts, with Linda Ulfhielm.

Door opening

LINDA

Hey! How are you?

WILL

Good! Nice to meet you!

LINDA

Nice to meet you, too!



WILL

Yeah.

NARRATOR

Over the course of eight episodes, Linda is in L.A. talking to people from different faith-based backgrounds about the big questions in life. You're listening to Preach Shorts, snackable edits from the podcast Preach.

WILL

All right. Uh, are you ready to check this out?

LINDA

Yeah, I think I'm ready.

WILL

Okay, that's good.

LINDA

I think so. I don't know what to expect.

LINDA

In this episode, I'll be talking to Will, a Buddhist, to help let go of the things I can't control. Will invites me to his home in Fairfax, a young neighborhood in Central L.A. He's wearing a grey t-shirt with the text "Never Give Up" and the logo of the Buddhist community he belongs to. We take a seat on a couple of red chairs in front of a small shrine. There's incense, candles, and a miniature Buddha figure. Will is going to show me how to chant, one of the key rituals in the Buddhist practice.

Music

LINDA

I'm not sure what I'm doing.

WILL

Yeah. I'll show you exactly.

LINDA

Okay.

WILL

So... This is... Do you want to turn around real quick? We're chanting: "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo." Take this.

LINDA

How do you pronounce it?

WILL / JOYCE

Yeah, so it's "nam, n-a-m, myoho..."

LINDA

Nam myoho...



WILL

...rengé...

LINDA

...rengé...

WILL

...kyo...

LINDA

...kyo...

WILL

Yeah, and we're going to be chanting towards the scroll right here. Uh, it's not like a magical piece of paper or anything. But uh, you know, but Buddhism is not about praising or worshipping a Buddha. You know, Buddhism really teaches that you're a "Buddha" or you're this infinite being.

LINDA

Okay.

WILL

So, when you're chanting, right, um, it's a prayer, but we're not begging or asking the universe for anything, you know? You're just making a decision, a determination, for whatever it is that you want in your life.

LINDA

Oh, okay...

WILL

Like, zero judgment. You know, like, what's your dream?

LINDA

To be a musician.

WILL

A musician? Yeah.

LINDA

Or an actress.

WILL

Or an actress. Or both!

LINDA

Both!

WILL

Or both! Yeah! Yeah, you can do both! Or you can do it all. So, uh, when you're chanting, you're able to well forth this kind of infinite potential that already, you know, exists within you. You can chant decisively. Eyes open.



LINDA

Okay.

WILL

Focus. All right? And we're going to bring this forth and we'll chant for, like, a few minutes. Slowly, first, you know, so you can get it. All right, so uh...

LINDA

I'm nervous.

WILL

Yeah, don't be, it's okay. You're here.

WILL / JOYCE / LINDA (Chanting)

Nam-myoho-renge...

LINDA

Oh, there's like a pace.

WILL / JOYCE / LINDA (Chanting)

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo

LINDA

What does it mean? You know, the words?

WILL

Uh, ultimately, it means you're absolutely awesome.

LINDA

Okay.

WILL

When you're saying it, like, you're pretty much saying "I am absolutely awesome," in the most absolute sense.

LINDA

I wonder if Will has any advice on how to deal with anxiety, or as in my case, hypochondria. I show Will a bruise on my leg, that I've been worrying about all day.

LINDA

I like, think I'm going to die, and I have like...

WILL

Well you will, eventually.

LINDA

I know, that's the tough part. Yeah.



WILL

But we all will, you know, at some point.

LINDA

I know, and I can't control it. And that's... I just... I just wonder how you handle those kind of stuff. And if your belief or you know, the chant, like, helps you with...with like, those kind of thoughts? Or maybe you're not as anxious as I am.

WILL

I get... I get very anxious, too.

LINDA

You do?

WILL

Yeah, for sure. I'm an actor, and uh... But, you know, as I see some of my peers, you know, advance in their careers... What about like, me? What's going on with like, my life, and how can I make a contribution if I'm not like, being more successful or whatever.

LINDA

Yeah.

WILL

Right? Buddhism... A fundamental aspect of Buddhism is based on the laws of cause and effect. Whether you think you're doing something or not, you're constantly creating causes and simultaneously, there's an effect, right? In some way or form. So, based on that definition of cause and effect, would you agree or disagree, that this moment right now, sitting in my living room, is a manifestation of every single cause you've ever made your entire life? Every action or non-action, word not word, thought not thought, has led to this moment.

LINDA

It is. Oh, my god!

WILL

Yeah, but then...

LINDA

That was deep. Yeah.

WILL

So then, is it...

LINDA

It's true.

WILL

Yeah.

LINDA

Yeah, it's true.



WILL

So then, is it reasonable that um, your entire past then exists in this moment?

LINDA

Huh?

WILL

Is it reasonable then, that your entire past exists in this moment?

LINDA

Yeah...

WILL

Yeah?

LINDA

Yeah. Yeah!

WILL

Because of all of the causes that's led and manifested to this moment now, right? And then uh, you know, Buddhism is really um, rooted in reason, you know, so, uh, I think it's also reasonable that your entire future exists in this moment. You know, a lot of people have fears from past experiences.

LINDA

Yeah.

WILL

You know? Yeah? Anxiety uh...about like...you know, based on the future.

LINDA

Yeah.

WILL

Right? Uh, and those are realities, right? The past, present, and future, right? But the truth of it all, is that they all exist in this moment. You know? Right here and now.

Buddhist chanting

LINDA

You know, I... It sounds great, you know, if it works for you, but I'm not sure how I can be able to apply it to myself, you know?

WILL

Well, it's very simple. So, it's...it's not something that happens overnight, you know? There's a lot of probably like, negative conditioning that you have to break through. You know, these false beliefs about yourself, you know, that also then reflect false beliefs about other people and humanity and, you know, this life, right? So, um... You know, the great thing about this practice is that you are... It's coming from you. You know? Everything... You already have all of the answers, you know, for your life. You already have everything.



LINDA

Yeah.

WILL

You know? It's just a matter of accessing it. You don't necessarily have to call yourself a Buddhist.

LINDA

No.

WILL

Right? Actually, I don't call myself a Buddhist.

LINDA

You don't?

WILL

No, because um... Like, mainly because of what people think Buddhism is. And it's like...whatever... Did you think that this was what Buddhism is?

LINDA

No.

WILL

Not at all, right?

LINDA

No, not at all, actually.

WILL

You thought there might be some monks, you know, there might be some you know, particular rituals.

LINDA

Yeah.

WILL

Well, you know, what makes this a religion is the faith aspect to it, right? So, in other religions, um, there's faith in uh, maybe a god or certain like, figures, you know, people. Um... But in this practice, it's faith in what... It's faith in yourself.

LINDA

Oh, wow!

WILL

Yeah. And you know...

LINDA

I like that.



WILL

Yeah, it's faith, absolute faith in you, you know, and who you are.

Music

WILL

Why do you feel like you need to know everything? Or why... Why do you feel like you need to control everything?

LINDA

Hmm... That's a good question. I've never really asked myself that. I just say that I'm a control freak, and that's all I am. I never really question why I am like that, why I need to control everything. I just feel like...

(Will and Linda talking over each other)

WILL

I mean, that's something if you... You don't have to answer that now, of course, because that might be something...

LINDA

No, I just think it's a good question, because I've never really... thought of why I'm like that, but...

WILL

But it's worth exploring.

Mobile notification

LINDA

It was Tinder.

WILL

Oh!

Laughter

LINDA

Always.

WILL

Always.

LINDA

Always present.



LINDA

You've just heard snippets from my conversation with Will. He said the situation you're in right now is the effect of all the choices and causes you've made throughout your whole life. And therefore, your past, present, and future exist simultaneously in the present moment. Well, this explanation took me more than a little while to digest. It's so complicated, I know. I'm so used to hearing that destiny's something that just happens to us. It's good or bad luck. But he's actually saying the complete opposite. That all my choices have come together in the present moment. And I'm deciding now how to influence my future. So, how do you think a Buddhist approaches life differently, from someone who's, for example, Christian? How do they think about control, the future, and destiny?

Music

NARRATOR

You've just finished Preach Shorts with Linda Ulfhielm. Preach is a production from The Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company, by Daniel Persson Mora, Nanna Olasdotter Hallberg, Ludvig Widman, Tove Jonstoj, Karin Winther and Martina Magorin Borg, with host Linda Ulfhielm.

Outro music

NARRATOR

This was a program from the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company. You'll find more at UR Play.