



A film by Gregory Kennedy

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

**bo·dhi·satt·va** /,bōdā'sätvə/ *noun*

"A bodhisattva is an awakened being, one who practices generosity without fear, a true hero who takes on whatever form is needed."

### Faith

*You have what you are looking for in yourself. You can have faith in the basic goodness, the basic beauty, the basic truth that is in you.*

1. Consider the reflection (quoted above) that introduces this segment of the film. How do you see evidence of these ideas in the film? How can these ideas inform our daily lives and our work for peace and justice today?
2. Reflect on and discuss Thich Tri Quang's analysis of the war and the role of the United States in it that he shared with Alfred Hassler, the Rev. James Lawson, and other pacifists who went to Vietnam in 1965. Consider also his position in 1967 of refusing to meet with any American as long as the U.S. was involved in the war.

To inform your reflection and discussion, recall his observations on that first visit.

Gentlemen, the Buddhist position is not within any party. You, the communists, the Viet Cong, all speak about peace, but victory and peace are not the same. To the Vietnamese people, you are the foreigners who have invaded Vietnam. And until you leave, it is inconceivable that the Vietnamese resistance, the violence, will cease.

### Diligence

*People with the energy of diligence are extraordinarily powerful. They can transform themselves, their community, the environment, and the world.*

3. Consider the reflection (quoted above) that introduces this segment of the film. How do you see evidence of these ideas in the film? How can these ideas inform our daily lives and our work for peace and justice today?
4. Upon hearing the Memorial Day bells toll at Trinity Church in New York, Alfred Hassler explains to Thich Nhat Hanh why he does not think those bells ring for him. Nhat Hanh responds by telling him about the meaning and power of bells in the Buddhist tradition, the belief that the sound of the bell can be heard clearly by living beings "even in the darkest spots," allowing all suffering in them to cease.

How can we reconcile these different understandings of bells for these two men? Do you think they reconciled them? Why or why not?

## **Mindfulness**

*Mindfulness is the energy of being aware of what is happening in the present moment. When we have the energy of mindfulness in us, we are fully present. We are fully alive, and we live deeply every moment of our daily life.... Mindfulness is the capacity to recognize things as they are.*

5. Consider the reflection (quoted above) that introduces this segment of the film. How do you see evidence of these ideas in the film? How can these ideas inform our daily lives and our work for peace and justice today?
6. The film notes that Thich Nhat Hanh and Dr. King first met in person in Chicago in 1966 and that it was about a year later that King gave his famous “Beyond Vietnam” speech.

Read this short passage from that April 4, 1967 speech, given one year to the day before he was assassinated.

And as I ponder the madness of Vietnam and search within myself for ways to understand and respond in compassion, my mind goes constantly to the people of that peninsula. I speak now not of the soldiers of each side, not of the ideologies of the Liberation Front, not of the junta in Saigon, but simply of the people who have been living under the curse of war for almost three continuous decades now. I think of them, too, because it is clear to me that there will be no meaningful solution there until some attempt is made to know them and hear their broken cries.

How does this reveal and reflect what Dr. King may have learned from Thich Nhat Hanh? How does it bear out the stories and recollections of Sister Chan Khong that we see in the film?

## **Concentration**

*Concentration can help us look deeply into the nature of reality and bring about the kind of insight that can liberate us from suffering.*

7. Consider the reflection (quoted above) that introduces this segment of the film. How do you see evidence of these ideas in the film? How can these ideas inform our daily lives and our work for peace and justice today?
8. Sister Chan Khong was imprisoned for eight days after being arrested for having Thich Nhat Hanh’s book. Alfred Hassler spent nine months in federal prison in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania for refusing the draft during World War II. Dr. King was imprisoned 29 times during his life.

Why do you think the filmmakers use the backdrop of these individuals’ incarcerations to highlight people’s growing understanding of interconnectedness and its power to bring about a new awakening?

## **Insight**

*When we begin to touch insight, we are deeply in touch with reality, and there is no longer any fear. There is compassion. There is acceptance. There is tolerance.*

9. Consider the reflection (quoted above) that introduces this segment of the film. How do you see evidence of these ideas in the film? How can these ideas inform our daily lives and our work for peace and justice today?
10. What does Sister Chan Khong say that Alfred Hassler was to her and to Thich Nhat Hanh? What is the lesson or significance of her recollection for us?

## **Closing Reflection and Discussion**

After watching the film, think back to this passage from the introduction.

There are moments when reality is both the riddle and the clue, the question and the answer, the destination and the path – moments when the actions of a courageous few determine the fates of many.

Reexamine these ideas in light of the stories told in the film. Where did you see examples of moments that possessed these elements and layers? How can thinking about moments in this way inform both our daily lives and our participation in struggles for peace and justice today?