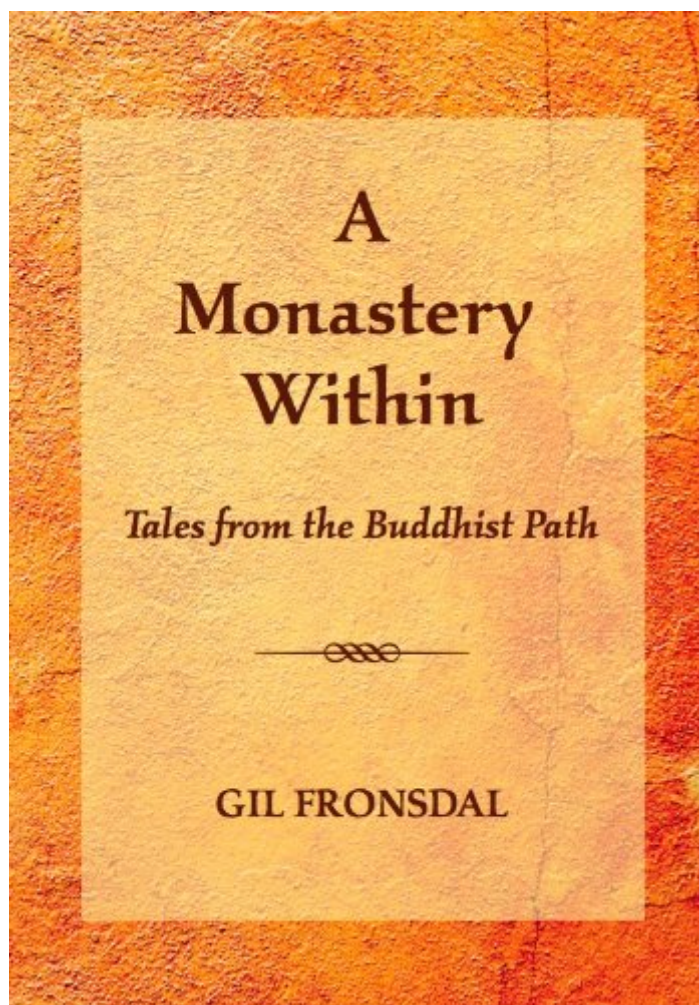


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# A Monastery Within: Tales From The Buddhist Path



## Synopsis

Inspired by his years of Buddhist monastic life, Gil Fronsdal has written these warm-hearted stories as part of the tradition of teaching through storytelling. These are tales of transformation and spiritual growth. They delight and challenge as they express different facets of the Buddhist path to liberation in familiar, yet fresh and engaging, ways. These stories can be reread often, each time supporting new reflections on the spiritual life and the possibility of each person awakening to the kindness, clarity and insight available to all of us. *A Monastery Within* points to how each person can build an inner home for the awakened life.

About the Author: Gil Fronsdal is the primary teacher for the Insight Meditation Center in Redwood City, California. He has been teaching since 1990 and has practiced Zen and Vipassana in the U.S. and Asia since 1975. He was a Theravada monk in Burma and trained with Jack Kornfield to be a Vipassana teacher. He was also ordained as a Soto Zen priest at the San Francisco Zen Center and received Dharma Transmission from Mel Weitsman. Gil has a PhD in Religious Studies from Stanford University. His translation of the "Dhammapada", an important collection of Buddhist verses, is published by Shambhala Publications. He is the author of "The Issue at Hand: Essays on Buddhist Mindfulness Practice." He is a husband and a father of two sons.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This latest book by Gil Fronsdal is a gem. The stories are short and entertaining, and go deep. They reflect the author's sensibilities, his humor, and knowledge, all with a light touch. The first time I read the book I read it from cover to cover quite quickly, just enjoying the stories. Then I began to randomly turn to one story at a time, and used it to reflect on the three main topic areas Gil has included; Kindness, Clarity and Wisdom. In the tradition of teaching tales like those of the Sufis, these stories stand on their own and also point to the tradition's wisdom. So I am buying copies for friends who are Buddhists and friends who are not Buddhists, believing that every one who loves a good story will enjoy this book.

I have a bad habit of reading more Buddhist and philosophical books than I probably should. After thousands of dense and convoluted lines of text, it was refreshing to find Gil's new book. A Monastery Within includes dozens of short stories that are grouped into three key themes: kindness, clarity, and wisdom. Some of the stories are a few pages, others are a mere paragraph. It's the type of book that is going to deliver something different every time you read it. Refreshing in its simplicity, this is a great book to return to whenever you're looking for a nugget of wisdom to add a spark of inspiration or insight to your day.

I have listened to dozens of Zencast podcasts by Gil Fronsdal of the Insight Meditation Center in California, so when I learned about this book I was happy to order it. I very much enjoyed the stories and the insights they provide. In particular, the story of how one flower can be compared to a smaller and a larger flower reminded me of the unimportance of comparisons to others. I plan to read this book again soon, and will turn to it many times in the future. Highly recommended.

For me, this book was aptly titled and a great investment. Each short story or simple statement has kindled curiosity. Sometimes it was a page or so, at others just a few lines or a few choice words like, "why not?." But "Monastery" is opening passages into wonder; vast arenas of possibilities. This is a unique opportunity to question, or accept, maybe ponder. I don't believe that this book was intended for children. As an adult, I hear it speaking in profound but quiet simplicity, triggering inspiration, investigation and a bit more awareness. It is so well written that if you read this to

children, they will get what they need from it just as those reading or, listening to them read, will. I think it would be interesting to hear what a child sees in these stories. This book won't be a one time read for me. In fact, I believe that it will remain with me for a long, long time.

I love this type of book - simple, thoughtful entries ranging from one sentence to a full page that teach a Buddhist lesson. I liked reading one before bed each night. The tales are simple enough that you could easily read them to children, and they are smart and never trite or verging into platitudes. One of the things I'm going to try in it is the experiment where you try to go a day without using the words "I," "me," "mine" or "myself" unless required for answering a direct question. Excerpt: "Breathe in an easy and relaxed way and then study what causes you to lose that ease. Everything you really need to know about Buddhism will be found in that investigation." • Grade: A-

Fronsdal writes clearly, with the apparent and easy knowledge of an insider. The short stories are all very much in the Zen manner, but somehow without the more subtle and complex "one hand clapping" intricacies. That said, the stories work well both as simple little tales but also as more specialized Buddhist lessons. I can't recall ever reading anything else by Fronsdal, but from now on I will be looking out for more by this marvelous writer.

It's evident that Gil Fronsdal's love of the Dharma comes through in his stories. We get to experience the teachings from the inside out - his stories sink into the heart and allow us to feel and experience the teachings in a deeper and perhaps more accessible way. For those readers who can't or haven't had the opportunity to attend one of Gil's retreats, many of these stories are ones he has shared in retreat or in his teachings at the Insight Meditation Center in Redwood City. Each one is a jewel, to be turned in the hand and heart to see and explore the many facets of the story; to be treasured, favorite stories to share and recollect; and to remind us that we don't have to go anywhere to find peace or enlightenment - we all have a monastery within!

A Monastery Within, Gil Fronsdal's newest book, is, as he writes, the kind of book to read slowly and savour. I, indeed, did close the book after each wonderful story and think about all the layers of meaning for my life. I also sent a copy to one of my closest friends for her birthday. She's a psychologist and has used some of the stories with her clients. Even though I'm working on not clinging to my books, this book is a keeper. For those of you who aren't acquainted with this masterful storyteller and wise Vipassana teacher, go to [...] to hear his lovely, caring voice...the only

thing missing from this book.

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