

## Practicing Goodness to Accumulate Virtue

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
Thursday, 05 May 2016 11:11

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### [ [Master's Teachings](#) ]

Throughout my life, I have always had three daily prayers. First, I pray not for a healthy body, but for a clear mind. As the years pass, our bodies undergo aging and finally death, but our wisdom-life is everlasting. If we do not quickly develop our wisdom-life and strengthen our aspirations, then our wisdom will not grow. Thus, I do not ask for good health, but for a mind of clarity and wisdom, without discursive thoughts. This is my first prayer.

Second, I pray not for everything to go my way, but for perseverance and courage. In life, nine things out of ten do not happen according to our wishes, so why do we try to force things to go our way? As ordinary beings, it is our expectations and desires that cause us suffering and afflictions. So, I do not ask for everything to go my way, but for perseverance and courage. When things do not go as we wish, we must persevere; this is a skill we must master. We must also keep up our courage. We should not easily become disappointed or discouraged when we do not get what we want. If we constantly let ourselves be defeated, won't we remain powerless our whole lives? Therefore, we should not ask for everything to go according to our wishes. Instead, we should always reflect on ourselves to see if we have perseverance and courage.

It is precious to be born as a human being. The Buddha tells us that over millions of kalpas, it is difficult to attain human form even once. We may wonder whether, in the past, we were born in the three evil realms. Have we suffered in hell? Have we been born in the animal realm, suffering from ignorance and being killed by humans? Or have we been tormented in the realm of hungry ghosts? The Buddha-Dharma tells us that these three evil realms are filled with unbearable suffering. This is truly frightening! Therefore, we must work hard to cultivate ourselves.



Being born as humans, we have the opportunity to witness all kinds of wholesome and unwholesome lives. When we see someone doing good, we have to ask ourselves, do we rejoice at this? When we see other people do good deeds, we are filled with respect and joy. However, we should not only rejoice in their good deeds, but should also get involved ourselves. If we are able to do this, we will feel very fortunate to have been born human. When we see other people do good deeds, we joyfully praise them and gladly join them in the work to help suffering sentient beings. When we help those who suffer fulfill their needs, we realize that we have more than enough. Since we have more than we need, we have the power to help others meet their needs and overcome their obstacles. Then the happiness we feel is due not only to taking joy in others people's merits, but to being filled with Dharma-joy ourselves. This is something that is possible only in the human realm.

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Since we have been born as humans, how can we not make good use of our life? We need to seize our time in this life and take good care of our thoughts. I often say, "Seize the moment and sustain your aspirations forever." At every moment, we have to be mindful of our thoughts; when a good thought arises, no matter how brief it is, we must take hold of it and sustain it forever. Recently, I have been encouraging everyone to uphold the Four Practices: extended practice, uninterrupted practice, practice with nothing further, and practice with reverence. This means we need to endlessly sustain and uphold our initial aspiration. Moment by moment, time passes us by and thoughts keep arising. Therefore, we must have perseverance; we must always sustain our good and virtuous thoughts and put our love into action by helping others. This is spiritual cultivation.

Furthermore, we must not be afraid of taking responsibility. We are all fortunate enough to have been born into this world, so aren't the matters of this world everyone's responsibility? How much more so for us spiritual practitioners! We who are learning the Buddha's spirit must learn the persistence of the Buddha, who keeps coming back for the single great cause of helping sentient beings in this world. One person's strength alone is not enough for this, which is why the Buddha wants to teach many people. When every person makes the aspiration to be a Bodhisattva, everyone must put the teachings into practice. Then, this collective strength will be tremendous.

Therefore, my third prayer is not for lighter responsibilities, but for greater strength. I hope that we can purify people's hearts and inspire people's love. The world is vast and there are countless sentient beings. If everyone can join together in the same aspiration, our love can reach every corner of the world. Then, there is no limit to the good that can be accomplished.

*The Jing Si Dharma Lineage is a path of diligent practice.  
We carry on the Dharma's essence and make great vows.  
The Tzu Chi School of Buddhism is a path through the world.  
With compassion and wisdom, we exercise the Four Infinite Minds.*

*With sincerity, we vow to deliver all sentient beings.  
With integrity, we vow to eliminate all afflictions.  
With faith, we vow to learn all teachings.  
With steadfastness, we vow to attain Buddhahood.*

*Great loving-kindness without regrets brings infinite love.  
Great compassion without resentment brings infinite vows.  
Great joy without worries brings infinite happiness.  
Great equanimity without expectations brings infinite grace.*

*We work together while remaining clear and pure like a crystal sphere.  
This forest of Bodhi trees flourishes from the same root.  
We are all united in cultivating fields of blessings.  
We deeply plant the roots of wisdom on the Bodhisattva-path*

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Fifty years have passed since Tzu Chi was founded. Today is the first day of Tzu Chi's fifty-first year. I hope we can all practice diligently along the path of the Jing Si Dharma Lineage and the road of the Tzu Chi School of Buddhism. If we can do this, we will cultivate the good karma that accumulates to perfect our virtue.

Notes from Master Cheng Yen's teaching on the first day of Tzu Chi's 51st year  
At Jing Si Abode, May 1, 2016