

Inner Practice for the Tzu Chi Path

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In Tzu Chi, our practice is to enter into society with the spirit of selfless love that the Buddha teaches—the Four Immeasurable Minds of loving-kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity.

But to work in the world, we will need to cultivate moral discipline, concentration and unshakableness of mind, and wisdom. Otherwise, it will be easy to stray from our practice and difficult to continue in the face of the challenges of working in the mundane world.

Upholding the precepts is the way we practice moral discipline. The precepts outline for us the right path and in so doing, they protect us by helping to keep us away from wrongdoing. As we work in the world, our hearts can very easily become tainted. The precepts guide us to cultivate purity of heart and mind. It is this inner purity that enables us to touch an inner state that is very tranquil and pure.

The quality of concentration and unshakableness of mind is also very important; in Sanskrit, this is called "samadhi". As we engage in the world in the effort to work for the good of all living beings and live out the Buddha's spirit of wisdom and compassion, we will inevitably encounter difficult situations. The world is very complicated, and working in it can be troublesome. If we have not developed samadhi or a kind of unshakableness of mind and purpose, how would we be able to do it? Everyone has their personality, habits, and personal ways of doing things, and this can make our work tough or frustrating. If we have not developed samadhi, our minds will easily be affected by the conditions around us. Because our minds are constantly reacting, our wisdom cannot arise. Only with samadhi and by developing the capacity to not be perturbed by circumstances can we develop wisdom and insight.

Wisdom and insight are what allow us to continue on our path and not give up. In Tzu Chi, as we walk our path, we are also continuing to pave the path for others, so that they may join us on our journey. This is important because we should not only care about our own enlightenment, but should vow to help all living beings to enlightenment. Without wisdom and insight, it will be hard to continue with this.

This inner practice and cultivation of moral discipline, samadhi, and wisdom is hence essential as we walk on the Tzu Chi path. Only through such practice can we attain an inner state of great purity and silent tranquility, with vows vast as the endless void—vows that we hold on to, unwaveringly, for countless eons of time.

From Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Talks
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