

Words to Volunteers: Our World, a House on Fire

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Friday, 14 November 2014 15:35



Our world is like a house that is on fire, and we are like children who are caught up in our games and play that we do not feel the danger...

Select teachings and points made by Master in the Morning Volunteer Assembly

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Concurrent Aid Works in Progress

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Part I

Witnessing 'More Bodhisattvas, More Capacity to Help' -- In China, Tzu Chi volunteers are visiting families in remote villages in order to assess their needs in preparation for the upcoming winter aid distribution. These families suffer from extreme poverty and are barely surviving despite government subsidies of food, clothing, housing, and medical care. Many of the volunteers visiting them have only recently joined Tzu Chi, but have already taken up the mission to reach out to people such as the elderly who live alone or people in poverty. Seeing them travel to one village after another and give of themselves to bring tender loving care, we are very happy that there are more and more people beginning to bring forth the inner riches in their hearts to care for others. Such care makes this world a very heartwarming place. Yet, at the same time, we see from their visits that there are many people facing hardship and material shortages, and we really feel for their suffering. Knowing that there are such living bodhisattvas in many locations working to bring people the aid they need gives us much comfort and peace of mind.

What People Suffering Disaster Need -- In China, we also see that a large part of Zhejiang Province has suffered flooding as a result of the tropical cyclone, Fitow. While the typhoon didn't affect Taiwan, staying offshore as it passed by the island, look at the heavy flooding it has brought to China. The rural areas have been especially hard-hit, and there are many underprivileged families affected. It is a good thing that our volunteers have been able to go to

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them to bring aid. Residents have had to survive amidst the floodwaters for over a week—we can only imagine how hard that is and what they have been suffering. Being in such circumstances, they really need people to go to them, to comfort them, and to meet their urgent needs. I am grateful that Tzu Chi volunteers are doing this, not only bringing aid but warm care by treating the people like family. Such love truly creates very beautiful scenes in our world.

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Part II

Our World, a House on Fire -- As there are volunteers in different parts of the world, working to care for people in need, there are so many touching real-life stories to be shared and worthy of sharing; all that is lacking is the time needed to share them. But, with there already being not enough time to share these moving stories, why do I still spend time in the Morning Volunteer Assembly every day to tell everyone about the disasters happening in different parts of the world? It's because we must recognize the serious situation we are in and work hard to turn it around. Disasters truly are happening very frequently now, with destructive floods, storms, wildfires, and earthquakes happening simultaneously around the world, sometimes all within the same country, again and again. We should be very worried—these are major warning signs that the physical world we live in is seriously unhealthy and out of balance. Our world is like a house that is on fire, with the flames spreading quickly from all corners, and we are like children who are so caught up in their games and play that they do not feel the danger as the fire gets closer and closer to them. Or, we may even find the fire beautiful and play with it. Isn't that what we are doing as we ignore the warning signs and go on with our lifestyle as is? We continue to pollute the land, water, and atmosphere as well as create excessive carbon emissions. These have already led to global warming, and extreme disasters are happening frequently now. We really need to face this reality and wake up.

To Uphold All Teachings and Actively Do Good -- Being vigilant and aware of all the disasters happening, we need to understand that the disasters we are seeing now are the result of the unwholesome, negative karma that has built up through humankind's collective actions. Knowing this, we need to quickly take in the Dharma which inspires our goodness and teaches us to do good. Then we can purify our own hearts and others' hearts also, so that all of us won't so easily give rise to unwholesome thoughts that lead us to create negative karma. In giving teachings, the Buddha's hope is that we can understand and uphold all Dharma and then actively do all the good we can. With such purity of heart and actions, we can turn around our karma and reduce the suffering in our world.

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Part III

The Need to Broaden Our Scope -- Every day, I am almost like a news anchorperson, telling everyone about the disasters that are going on around the world. That is because it's truly important that all of us know more about what's happening in the world. Only by expanding our mental scope like this can our wisdom truly be awakened. What we normally know and hear about is very limited; we learn only what concerns our own circle or has an immediate relation to us. And, to things that please us we react with pleasure, while becoming afflicted over displeasing circumstances. With such a narrow scope, how can we possibly gain wisdom to

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fully understand all of life's truths and realities? Since we aspire to the Buddha's wisdom and to learn the ways of Bodhisattvas, we need to broaden our scope and our minds in order to follow the Buddha's example and gain wisdom as vast as his. We need to know more about what is occurring all around the world. So, every day, we need to tune into such news and also be very mindful in order to really feel and understand what is happening to our world and the true condition it is in.

A Life of Blessings and Wisdom -- In Malaysia, our volunteers are actively sharing Tzu Chi with everyone they encounter in the community to inspire people to donate to charity and do good. Their goal is to inspire one million people to become bodhisattvas. They are truly doing this out of a bodhisattva spirit—they want to quickly reach out to more people to help them find the love and riches in their hearts, and enter the door of wisdom. By joining Tzu Chi and dedicating themselves to helping others, people will develop more love and insight which will give them a better life full of blessings and wisdom. Beyond this, as more people act with love, our society and world will be more peaceful, harmonious, and filled with blessings. That is to the benefit of everyone in the world.

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Part IV

Concurrent Aid Works in Progress -- Right now, at this same time, Tzu Chi volunteers in China, Thailand, the U.S., Indonesia, Australia, and Bohol, Zamboanga and Cebu in the Philippines are all in the midst of disaster relief work. In China and Thailand, the disaster is a flood. In Indonesia and Bohol it is an earthquake. In Australia, it is a massive wildfire. In Colorado, U.S.A., the mission is to go to the aid of flood survivors in a region that had only recently suffered a wildfire. In Zamboanga, it is to help with recovery in villages devastated by the armed conflict between rebels and the government. From these examples, we can really feel how disasters are happening so frequently now, in so many different parts of the world at the same time. Tzu Chi volunteers are bodhisattvas in our world, going forward to help when people near them have encountered a disaster and are suffering hardship. I am truly very moved that the volunteers in these countries are so active in serving as a bodhisattva. But, at the same time, given these disasters, we must wake up—these are all major warnings about the state our world is in.

Compiled by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team, from Morning Volunteer Assembly teachings given in October 2013