

Real-life Story of Repentance: Sacrificing Oneself to Benefit Others

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Thursday, 25 August 2011 11:31



Chen Tianding (陳天定) is a very active Tzu Chi volunteer in Taiwan and a participant in the sutra adaption of the Water Repentance text. After taking part in the sutra adaptation and learning about the practice of repentance, he was remorseful for the wrongs he had committed in the past. Though he had in fact already changed from his old ways, he still felt repentant. He shared two stories from his life with fellow Tzu Chi volunteers.

One time, Mr. Chen was volunteering at the hospital. He encountered an elderly man who came to the emergency room. After the doctor had examined this patient, he asked Mr. Chen to take him to get an esophagoscopy. It showed a ball of betel nut fibers lodged in the man's throat. The doctor said to the elderly man's daughter, "Look at this. It has begun to turn septic now. You mentioned that your father was unable even to eat porridge. This is very serious, he needs an operation immediately."

When Mr. Chen saw what this gentleman's throat had become, he thought of Tzu Chi's precept of not chewing betel nuts. Then it occurred to him that he owned a piece of land on which he grew betel nut trees for income. Since the precept forbade chewing betel nuts, he thought that perhaps growing betel nut trees constitutes a violation of the precept. He felt guilty about it and began to consider taking the trees down.



One day, his best friend came to visit him. Seeing how his friend was a heavy betel nut user, Mr. Chen started to tell him how detrimental chewing betel nuts is to health, and asked him to quit chewing it. His friend retorted, "You're telling me! What about the betel nut trees you grow on your land? If I don't buy and chew the betel nuts, who are you going to sell them to?" To get his friend to quit, Mr. Chen challenged him, "If I cut down all my betel nut trees, you have to quit chewing betel nuts. How about it?" "Fine," his friend replied. "If you can get rid of all your betel nut trees, I'll quit chewing betel nuts."

A few days later, Mr. Chen hired an excavator and leveled all the betel nut trees on his 1.5 acre land and switched to growing peanuts, tomatoes, cabbages, and other vegetables. When his friend found out about this sometime later, he couldn't believe it. After going to see the land for himself, he quit chewing betel nuts as promised. Though cutting down his betel nut trees would reduce his earnings, Mr. Chen was willing to do it because he realized how harmful chewing the nuts can be for people.

Mr. Chen also told another story. He used to own a seafood restaurant which meant he was responsible for the death of many living creatures. However, he had an experience that transformed him. Seventeen years ago, he went to the Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital to serve as a

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hospital volunteer. He was working in the emergency room when a young man was brought in along with his severed hand. There had been a dreadful accident with a circular saw, and the man was losing a lot of blood. While trying to stop the bleeding, the doctor asked Mr. Chen to help the nurse clean up the severed hand. The hand had already turned pale as there was no blood circulating to it. When Mr. Chen touched the pale severed hand, an image of a pig knuckle surfaced in his mind. At that moment, he felt that the hand of a human is no different from the foot of a pig. Both are made of flesh and blood. Upon this realization, he decided not to eat meat anymore, and closed his seafood restaurant so that he wouldn't have to kill any more sea creatures. This experience at the hospital changed the way he earned his livelihood.

After learning about the repentance teachings and realizing the wrongs he had done, Mr. Chen felt very remorseful. As a way to repent for this, he has become active in doing as many good deeds as he can to help people.

To read Master's teachings on the practice of repentance, please [click here](#) .

By the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team, based on information from the Tzu Chi website