

## Being Seventy Years Old at Birth

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
Wednesday, 10 March 2010 10:12

---



### [Master's Teaching]

Every time I see young people volunteering at our [Tzu Chi hospital](#), I feel there is great hope for our society.

Many young people today lead a privileged life. From the day they were born, their parents have seen to their every need, giving them a very good life. When these young people come to the hospital to do volunteer work, they encounter people with lives very different from their own. Witnessing the suffering and hardships of others makes them realize how fortunate they are and that being so blessed, they ought to make use of all that they have to help others.

As a human being, this body of ours enables us to do many things. However, if we do not make good use of our body to do good, it will be a waste. In the daily evening Buddhist service, there is the following verse: With each passing day, our life diminishes accordingly. Like fish that is losing water, where is the joy in this? This verse reminds us that our time in life is limited, so we should be diligent and not idle our time away. It tells us that we are like fish in a fish tank. There is a crack in the tank, however, and the water is slowly leaking out. Despite this, the fish continues to swim happily in the water, unaware that the water is draining away. This is a metaphor for our life. Just as the water in the tank leaks out drop by drop, with the passing of time, the days we have left on Earth also diminishes. Many of us are very much like the fish, oblivious that the time we have left is decreasing.

I often hear many young people say, "I'm nineteen years old, and I'll be turning twenty next year." Actually, it's not entirely correct to count our age forward. We ought to count our age backwards. For example, if a person lives to the age of seventy, then at the time of his birth, he would be "seventy years old". A year later, he would be sixty-nine years old. With each passing year, his age is subtracted by one. If one has this concept of counting one's age backwards, one will be very active and diligent in life.

If we count our life by the method of addition, it would lead to the notion that we will always have tomorrow to do things. If there is something that we have yet to do, we will put it off until tomorrow. But, tomorrow has tomorrow's tasks awaiting us. When we do not make good use of our time today, we are essentially letting time slip by and wasting it away.

I hope that young people today can make good use of their time and do things that will benefit society.