

Developing a Heart of Equality

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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[[Master's Teachings](#)]

With Tzu Chi volunteers in over 50 countries, when disasters happen locally, volunteers nearby will mobilize to bring aid and comfort to people in need. It was through such disaster relief distributions by Tzu Chi volunteers that a local government official came to know more about Tzu Chi. Wanting to learn more, this official came to Taiwan and visited the foundation's headquarters in Hualien. Touched and inspired by the spirit of selfless love that he witnessed in Tzu Chi volunteers and in the work they do, and though neither Asian nor Buddhist, this official expressed to Dharma Master Cheng Yen his wish to become her disciple. Accepting him, the Master took time to explain the following concepts to him so that as a disciple, he would have the right view toward religion and walk on the right path when he returned to his country:

“The truth is that all human beings, no matter their race or religion, are in essence equal. Religion, in fact, is about the true principles of life. When a religion offers a correct teaching of these principles, by following the teachings, people will be able to do a lot of good and benefit all humankind. But, some people, speaking in the name of religion, use it to establish a sense of supremacy or superiority. True, authentic religions always hope people can understand that all human beings are inherently equal and possess the same true nature. They will teach people that they too are capable of achieving the kind of unsurpassed wisdom that the most exalted sage or holy person has achieved—in other words, each and every one of us has the same capacity to become a Buddha, an ‘Enlightened One’.”

“The potential for enlightenment is just the same in all of us, it is only that our hearts have fallen away from what is true and right. Once our minds deviate from that right direction, our thinking and intentions start becoming complicated and we will wish to exert our will over others. That's how the struggle for power starts, and this engenders conflict, strife, and oppression, creating violent unrest, crisis, and human misery.”

“It all started with us human beings being self-centered and selfish. So, we want things to be under our control. Our material desires are also endless. That's why today's society is so focused on the pursuit of economic wealth, with manufacturing and businesses continually expanding. In this process, our land and natural environment is exploited and destroyed. But what also gets destroyed is our conscience—our moral principles and our humanity. Our society too gets destroyed. With everyone pursuing his or her self-gain, a huge disparity between rich and poor results, leading to great inequality, tension, and struggle. All this came about because our heart and mind fell away from what is true and right.”

The Master also instructed:

“We need to respect all people and give unselfishly with love for all—this is ‘Great Love’. We must care for people with genuine love, and truly do it without any self-interests. Our motives must be unselfish. This is what the Buddha teaches us. The Buddha also teaches us that he

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isn't the only person that can attain enlightened understanding of all truths. He says that he is no supreme being but is the same as us: he and all human beings in the world are equal. Like him, we can all become enlightened and become an 'Enlightened One' or Buddha."

"As all people are inherently equal, we need to respect each and every person. We also need to be grateful to every person, because it is only with every person's support and contribution that we have the means to do good deeds that can help people. So, we need to learn to have gratitude and respect for everyone."

"Recognizing the inherent equality of all living beings, and having gratitude, love, and respect for each and every person—these are core values in Buddhism, and very important teachings to practice."

Receiving this teaching with joy, the official thanked the Master and vowed to spread the spirit of Great Love when he returned to his country.

Written by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team
Based on Dharma Master Cheng Yen's conversations with visitors in Chinese