

## Nourishing the Seed of Goodness

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
Tuesday, 07 December 2010 11:25

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### [ [Master's Teachings](#) ]

In the heart of each and every one of us lies a seed of goodness. However, this seed will need water to grow. Spiritual teachings are this water. These teachings could come from Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, or other religions. So long as the teaching nourishes the seed of goodness in us and guides us to live in a wholesome way through which we benefit the world and grow spiritually, it is a good teaching. Such a teaching guides us in life, and that is why having a faith is so important.

In Tzu Chi, our spiritual faith is nurtured by the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings. This sutra teaches us to strive not only for our own enlightenment but the enlightenment of all living beings. As we practice the sutra's teachings, we learn to be like a farmer who tends to the seeds of goodness in the hearts of everyone, so that these seeds may sprout. Then, we continue to care for the seedlings, helping them grow into big trees. This is the work of a bodhisattva and the meaning of "walking on the Bodhisattva Path". As we do this, we also nourish our own seed of goodness and gradually draw closer to the heart of a Buddha.

The Buddha's heart is one of great compassion, and so the sutra teaches us to nurture compassion. In fact, such compassion is inherent in every one of us; we need only to bring it forth. Because of this compassion, we can feel the pain and suffering of others just as if we were experiencing the pain and suffering ourselves. This deep feeling for others will inspire us to take action to relieve their suffering. Compassion is therefore the driving force in our work of helping people in need.

The sutra also describes the spirit of a bodhisattva and the way he or she engages in the work of relieving suffering. The bodhisattva not only provides aid in times of need, but does so actively on his or her own initiative, without needing to wait for people's call for help. Thus, the sutra describes the bodhisattva as "going without needing to be asked". In giving help, the bodhisattva does so in a way that gives people a sense of security, peace, and happiness. He or she is also like a spiritual friend, guiding people away from wrong paths in life, by leading them to gradually understand life's meaning and purpose.

Of course, all this is no easy work by any means. At times, it can be very taxing and difficult. But when we get very tired from the work, what keeps us going is the power of gratitude, for it is a blessing to have the opportunity to help people and create a better life for others. This gives us spiritual joy, and we can continue to do the work happily and willingly.

The principles of the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings serve as a guide for us in Tzu Chi. They teach us to nurture compassion and love, and to take concrete actions to help people and better our world. In so doing, we nourish the seeds of goodness within ourselves and others. If we wish to change the world, we need to begin by transforming the hearts and minds of humanity. The sutra shows us how we can do this.

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From Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Talks  
Compiled into English by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team

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