

慈濟基金會 2015 年靜思語英語朗讀選文

【大專組、社會組】

8-1 : Excerpt form Article ***"Repenting Obstructions from Afflictions: Part V of the Repentance Series"*** from Global Tzu Chi Website at
http://tw.tzuchi.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=872%3Arepenting-obstructions-from-afflictions-part-v-of-the-repentance-series&catid=112%3Aseries-on-repentance&Itemid=322&lang=en

Our planet today is already in disequilibrium. Living in such circumstances, being vigilant and on guard is not enough; we need to be diligent in spiritual practice as well. What does it mean to be diligent? It means being wholeheartedly committed to the practice, without letting distractions or inner impurities arise and without turning away from our practice. We need to carefully look after our heart, so that it stays very clean and pure. This is difficult to achieve, however, because we often give rise to afflictions. When this happens, our mind very quickly turns into a petty, mundane mind.

It is these afflictions which cause us to lose touch with our true mind, our Buddha nature. In Buddhism, we say that the essence of the Buddha, living beings, and true mind are in fact of the same substance. We have the same capacity for enlightened understanding and insight as the Buddha; but with the arising of an unwholesome thought, we have tainted our mind. Our work now is to return to this pure, untainted true mind of enlightened wisdom.

Yet, we find that it is not easy to return to a pure mind, for our afflictions have become very entrenched. Since beginningless time, we have been engaging in wrong actions, which reinforce our greed and afflictions and cause them to grow. The impurities in our mind have been building up for an immeasurably long time. We say "beginningless time" because this duration of time is so long that it is incalculable. It is also hard to say when it began because for each person the starting point was different, for we each have different afflictions.

While we do not know when we began accumulating afflictions, we now have the opportunity to stop this pattern. We can do this by repenting from the bottom of our hearts. It isn't only the obvious wrongs that we must repent for; we also need to repent for even very subtle wrongs, such as the arising of an unwholesome thought.

For example, an unwholesome thought may have entered our mind the moment we saw someone. His or her actions may have caused anger to rise up in our hearts even though outwardly no one could tell we were angry. Yet, because an angry thought had arisen, we must quickly catch ourselves and repent. We shouldn't think that it doesn't matter because we didn't act on it. We still need to have feelings of repentance.

We need to repent for our attachments. We have greed and craving because of attachment. Our love of something has already created an attachment, so that we desire and crave it. Without it, we feel very unhappy. We can't let go and are compelled to seek it. Over time, this becomes a habit for us. What we desire could be fame, profit, or power. Looking about our world, we can see that so many problems and man-made calamities originate from greed. People fight for power, profit, and fame. This is why society is full of turmoil and without peace.

Instead of understanding the true meaning of life, we run after fame, profit, and power. This is because we are ignorant about life and don't understand the law of karma. We need to repent for such ignorance so that we don't continue in delusion. In truth, when we are fighting for personal gains, we are not happy. We also don't realize that the best kind of life is one in a peaceful and stable society, which is only possible if we work for the common good instead of our own self-interest. So, we confuse what creates a good life. This is all due to ignorance and we should sincerely repent.

In the course of our day to day life, we in fact do many wrong things, but if we can become aware of these and repent, there is great hope for us. We can start afresh and, in doing so, we create a better life for ourselves.

Similarly, we all have the Buddha nature in our heart. This Buddha nature is like the diamond in the rock. When we clean away our ignorance, the shiny, crystal clear Buddha nature will appear.

8-2 : Excerpt from Article "**Impartiality toward All Beings**" from the book "*Dharma as Water*"

When we lack a mindset of impartiality toward sentient beings, we have an attitude of, "I love this person; I do not love that person."

Whether we feel love or not is a distinction that we make. When we develop a discriminating mind, "attachments will arise" and we will show our bias. Then "attachments to conditions give rise to afflictions."

How can we truly be impartial to friends and foes? By treating those older than us as our parents, those similar in age as brothers or sisters, and those much younger as sons and daughters.

Only then can we eliminate our discrimination and attachments and truly be impartial to friends and foes. It is not easy to be impartial toward all beings. But if we can, we will always be happy. We also must let go of our attachments to worldly matters and material things. By following these practices, Tzu Chi volunteers display the qualities of Living Bodhisattvas so that we have role models everywhere.

On June 14, 1993, a fire broke out in a toy factory in Wugu Industrial Park. The managers of the factory were a married couple who are both Tzu Chi volunteers. That evening they happened to be out collecting donations. Their parents, younger brother, and three or four workers were still in the building. When the couple heard the news report and learned about the factory fire, they rushed back. When they arrived they found 38 fire trucks fighting the blaze, but the factory was already completely destroyed. Still, their only question was, "Is everyone safe?" After they confirmed everyone's safety, they continuously said, "Thank goodness. We are so grateful."

Everyone there wondered how they could be so calm and grateful.

Later, the man explained, "First, I am grateful that everyone is safe. Second, I am grateful to the firefighters for working so hard to put out the fire. Third, I am grateful to Tzu Chi volunteers for their comfort. Fourth, I am grateful that my employees expressed their willingness to help rebuild the factory. Lastly, I am grateful that this fire did not spread to other factories so that everyone else was safe as well. I am truly very grateful!"

His thinking at the time was very simple: What was gone was gone. There was no use in calculating how much he lost. He just thought about how much he still had. "I still have a healthy body. My family is safe. My employees are fine. Isn't physical health a form of wealth? I still have this wealth. My wisdom, my spirits, and my strength are abundant. So I have a lot to be grateful for." This steadied his mind.

He also remembered that I said, "We share ownership of worldly assets with the Five 'Families', so why be attached?" As he walked the Tzu Chi Bodhisattva-path, he realized that material wealth is collectively owned by the Five "Families"; there is no way to hold on to it. And because of his gratitude for everything he still had, he still felt very blessed. He exemplifies the spirit of a Tzu Chi volunteer; he can let go, not be attached and simply be filled with gratitude. He also hoped that, after this fire, each employee could have a deeper understanding of the impermanent nature of life. He was grateful to them for their willingness to stand by him, so he hoped that their Wisdom-life would grow, and that they would be able to experience the happiness and joy he feels from doing Tzu Chi's work.

This fire did not defeat him. Instead, it strengthened his will to practice. This is the mind of a Bodhisattva! Like a Bodhisattva, his mind was impartial. He has already transcended attachment to existence or emptiness so he can calmly face the realities of life without focusing on the obstacles.

The value in learning the Buddha's way is found when we apply it to our lives. By treating everyone and everything we encounter with an impartial mind, we will not create the causes and conditions for afflictions. Therefore, if we can practice what we learn and transform our attitude toward the circumstances of our daily living, we have developed true mastery.

8-3 : Excerpt from Article "**The Archer Prince**" from the book "*The Master Tells Stories*"

The king of a small country had two sons. The older son was good-looking and his skill at archery was superb. He was also good in literature and martial arts, so he won the respect of all people.

The second son was totally different. He was an arrogant, jealous good-for-nothing. The king knew this, so he announced that he would hand the throne over to his older son.

However, the prince didn't care about high rank. He thought of his brother's jealousy, and he was afraid that the whole kingdom would be thrown into chaos if he became king. Therefore, he refused to accept the throne. There was nothing the old king could do but let his second son take the throne.

After becoming the new king, the second son was unhappy because all the people in the kingdom respected his older brother, but not him. At the same time, there were some villainous ministers who stirred things up by telling him that the prince was buying the hearts of the residents, and someday he would certainly attempt to overthrow the king. So the new king vowed to get rid of his brother. He commanded that the prince be arrested and immediately executed!

The prince didn't know what to do. He only asked for a peaceful life for himself and the citizens of the kingdom. He couldn't believe that such a simple wish couldn't be fulfilled. He wasn't concerned

for his personal safety, but he cared very much about the peace of the kingdom. Therefore, he decided to flee.

The prince carried his bow and arrows to a neighboring kingdom. A minister of that country saw him and liked him very much. So he invited the prince to the palace to see the king. The prince only asked for a place to live, and because the king liked him too, he hired him as a guard.

After that, the prince stayed on in that kingdom and worked as the king's bodyguard.

Meanwhile, after that new king took the throne, he didn't know how to govern the country well. He continued to be arrogant, and his people became angrier and angrier. When other countries heard that the older prince had fled, they decided to swallow up this small kingdom.

When the young king heard this news, he was very frightened. He didn't know what to do. He normally acted very brave, but now that disaster was about to strike, he was terrified. He thought, "If my brother were here, everything would be all right." And so he started searching for him.

When the prince heard the news, he was quite concerned, because he still cared about his people and his state. So he asked the king to allow him to go back to his own country.

The young king saw his brother returning and embraced him happily. The prince comforted him and said, "Don't worry; I have an idea."

The prince went up to the city wall and shot an arrow toward the enemy camp. The arrow flew far and landed in the center of a dining table in the camp. The kings and their armies were surprised to see an arrow appear out of nowhere and land on their table. They saw a slip of paper on the arrow. "The prince has returned," it read. "I ask all the kings to stop their attacks."

The kings realized the troubles they would face if they carried out the assault. They decided to withdraw, and the small kingdom escaped disaster. The younger brother also realized his mistake and decided to hand over the throne to his brother. But the prince refused to accept it. "What I love about you is your repentance. I hope you can get rid of your jealousy and love others with an open mind." His younger brother was very touched and loved his brother even more. He asked his older brother to assist him in governing the country.

This story tells us that we must take a step backward when dealing with other people. When love others, we must open our hearts. We must have a mind as vast as the universe.

8-4 : Excerpt from Article "***The Great Things Love Can Achieve: Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) Relief***" from Global Tzu Chi Website

http://tw.tzuchi.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1191%3Athe-great-things-love-can-achieve-typhoon-haiyan-yolanda-relief&catid=82%3Amiscellaneous&Itemid=326&lang=en

The Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) disaster in the Philippines was truly a world-shocking calamity. In intensity, it was the most powerful typhoon in history ever to make landfall. But, it was also massive in size. Given such intensity and size, it was tremendously destructive.

Just that morning, the people on those affected Philippine islands were still going about their lives full of dreams and hopes. With the typhoon's landfall in the early afternoon, however, suddenly the violent winds, pounding rain, and storm surge with waves several meters high devastated everything in their path. In an instant, all that people had was reduced to nothing and their future became bleak.

Arriving there, the volunteers found massive destruction. There were bodies, mud, garbage, and debris everywhere, all made worse by the continued falling rain. With the severe damage, at one point, the city of Tacloban seemed as if it would be abandoned altogether.

But while those with means could leave, where could the poor go? They have no option but to stay and try to survive right there amidst the devastation. The only way for them to recover is to start over right where they are, but they have been traumatized and debilitated by the super typhoon and the massive destruction it brought.

How to help? The survivors were in a state of deep grief and helplessness. Feeling deeply for their pain, Tzu Chi volunteers could not bear for them to continue in such a state. But turning their situation around really requires the timely application of compassion and wisdom—action has to be coupled with compassion and wisdom in order to achieve positive and lasting influence.

Therefore, the volunteers not only comforted the survivors with loving care. We had to find a way to lift their spirits and empower them. That is why we launched a cleanup drive inviting survivors to clean up their community, and gave them a cash gift at the end of the day for their contribution. We wanted to help the survivors see that rebuilding is within their reach if everyone contributes and works together.

Since this program was an alternative form of relief aid, the daily cash gift—in essence emergency cash—would be enough to be a real help to the survivors. Because we were not there to hire workers, but to help the survivors rise above their sense of debilitation, recover from trauma, and stand up again, our volunteers carried out the program in a very warm, caring, and respectful way. Then, our volunteers held a prayer and asked everyone to pray sincerely for their family and for all affected by this devastating disaster.

Then, our volunteers rallied all present to work together: "Hope is right there in front of us. Let us all stand up and clean up the community together. We can rebuild our community!" Knowing that relief aid, including the emergency cash, came from countless people around the world, people who were total strangers and yet gave of themselves compassionately, the survivors were able to set aside their pain and bring forth their energy to contribute their efforts to the cleanup and recovery.

On the first day, around 600 people participated in the cleanup. The second day, there were around 2,700 people taking part. On the third, more than 9,000 came, and by the fourth, it was close to 10,000 people. After that, it was more than 20,000 people every day, then over 30,000. What a scene, to have over 30,000 people working together at the same time to clean up the city! By the end of 19 days of the cleanup, the survivors had carried out more than 280,000 cleanup shifts.

With every day's efforts and progress, we could see parts of the city starting to come back to life as soon as the roads were cleared. Street vendors started appearing on the cleared streets to resume their business. Considering that earlier, many had felt Tacloban would become a dead city with no hope for recovery—what a miraculous transformation has been brought about through the

collective efforts of the survivors. From this radical change in the city and the people, we witness how the power of love can bring truly touching results.

8-5 : Excerpt from Article "***Bringing Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva to Life***" from the Book "*The Power of the Heart*"

In Buddhism, there is a Bodhisattva who embodies the spirit of compassion. This Bodhisattva, named Avalokitesvara, is so full of love that she cannot bear for people to suffer. When she sees or hears people in distress or difficulty, she goes to them very quickly to offer aid and relief. Exercising wisdom and compassion, she not only helps them out of their material difficulties, but guides them with the Dharma so they may gain the insight to liberate themselves from their suffering and attain true happiness.

Actually, all of us can be Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. Deep in our hearts, we have the same great compassion. Why have we not been able to tap into this compassion? It is because it has been buried away beneath our afflictions and delusions. If we can cleanse our hearts of afflictions and delusions through repenting and learning the Dharma, we will discover our true heart, full of love, compassion, and understanding.

There is a lot of suffering in the world. Seeing the suffering of others, we can do as Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva does and go to people to help them out of their plight.

The story of Mr. Zhang Jincai is a very good example. Mr. Zhang is an elderly man who used to own a lumber company. At the prime of his life, he became addicted to gambling and incurred so much debt that he had to sell his business. His life went downhill from there. Faced with his misfortunes, he lost all sense of hope and motivation and gave up on himself. He became very self-isolated and eventually was so poor that he subsisted on food scraps from scavenging. He lived like this for many years.

One day, Tzu Chi volunteers came to learn of Mr. Zhang's situation. They decided to visit him and after seeing what terrible conditions he lived in, they began to visit him regularly to offer aid and care. Mr. Zhang, however, had developed a deep mistrust of people and was far from welcoming. Tzu Chi volunteers had to be very gentle and loving with him, patiently building rapport with him over a period of four years. Gradually, touched by their sincere care, he began to open his heart to the volunteers.

Seeing as he was still able-bodied, the volunteers encouraged him to get out more and interact with people, and invited him to help out at the local Tzu Chi office. He began to do this. When he was there, he would help mop the floor and wash vegetables in the kitchen. He was very motivated and whenever he was finished with one task, he would quickly find another.

Later, with the help of Tzu Chi volunteers, he found a job. After many years of interactions with Tzu Chi volunteers, he decided to enter training to become a certified Tzu Chi volunteer. Now, he is a certified member of Tzu Chi's Tzu Cheng Faith Corps and goes with other volunteers to help people in need. So transformed is his life now, that looking at him one would never guess the life he once led.

His story illuminates the heart of Tzu Chi's spirit and practice. In Tzu Chi, we learn to feel for others' suffering. Through our efforts to understand our own suffering and afflictions, we gain the insight and understanding to help others. With this, we can better relate to others and help them out of their difficulties.

As Mr. Zhang's case shows us, these difficulties are often not only physical and material. It therefore takes more than one-time aid. That is why we visit our care recipients regularly, giving them encouragement, support and love in their time of difficulty. We seek to be their spiritual friend, and by sharing our experiences and insights into life with them they can gradually open their hearts and break free from their afflictions. Then they can begin to see life differently and consider doing something that is more meaningful or beneficial to others. If we can continue to offer care and support, being their friend and guide, people can be transformed, just like Mr. Zhang.

Doing this, we bring to life the spirit of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva.