

慈濟基金會 2015 年靜思語英語朗讀選文

【高中組】

7-1 : Excerpt from Letters from Master Cheng Yen titled ***“Our Sincere Love and Care to All Hurricane Survivors”*** for Hurricane Sandy at

http://tw.tzuchi.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1046%3Aour-sincere-love-and-care-to-all-hurricane-survivors-&catid=96%3Aletters-from-master-cheng-yen-&Itemid=302&lang=en

Nature is unpredictable and fragile. Hurricane Sandy lashed through the islands of Caribbean and blanketed the entire U.S. East Coast with torrential rain and devastating wind at the end of October. Many families are still reeling from Hurricane Sandy's aftermath and dealing with collapsed buildings, flood damages, loss of loved ones, and battered public infrastructures.

Reports from our volunteers working in the worst hit areas told of people still trying to find refuge from the freezing cold. Trains and buses are slowly back to service but getting to many places remains a challenge. Blackout in the cities and towns took away their normal bustling vitality.

Following these news and reports every day, I and Tzu Chi volunteers all around the world feel for all your hardships and overwhelmed situation as you embark on the journey to recovery. My heart truly goes out to you and the heaviness I felt for your predicament cannot be described in words.

Yet, there are signs of hope and warmth. In the storm, first responders and volunteer organizations active in disaster immediately carried out nonstop response, rescue, and relief services day and night. Their spirit of service and sacrifices they have made to stay committed in their assignments are admirable.

U.S. Tzu Chi volunteers also felt your pain. Some of them were your neighbors and impacted by the storm as well. However, they delegate their family and business obligation in order to volunteer in the relief service. They establish "Tzu Chi Hurricane Sandy Relief Coordination Center" in New York City and Cedar Grove, New Jersey since day one. Facing with power outage and lack of gasoline, they still manage to get to your areas to assess your urgent needs.

Supports pour in from our Taiwan headquarters and various staging warehouses in the U.S. to New York and New Jersey for immediate distribution of emergency cash cards and supplies (i.e. blankets, instant rice, and personal care kits) while our U.S. volunteers began to appeal for the public to help. Even if people can only give a small amount of help, as long as many people pitch in, our collective strength enables us to deliver well wishes and relief supplies personally and directly to you to let you know you are not in this alone.

In addition, our volunteers in New York City and Long Island braced against the chilly wind and already delivered hot meals and blankets door-to-door daily after the storm has passed. These hot meals come from loving volunteers who cooked in our Chinatown Manhattan and Flushing kitchens in the dark, by candlelight or flashlight. Our New Jersey volunteers traveled all over the state from north to south amid gas limitation and traffics to assess damages and to express our sincere offer to help.

Our over consumption and desires for convenience have led us to extracting natural resources excessively. As a result, we upset Mother Nature balance and create extreme weather patterns. We also create too many pollutions and carbon footprints that damage Mother Nature and eventually lead to global warming and abnormal climates. To turn this trend around, we need to foster the spirit of love, respect and gratitude for all and return to a simple life. Give love and care to our fellow humans. Protect Mother Nature and all the creatures living on the Earth. That is the only way to a better and safer future.

With Great Love, we can help each other and recover from the disaster. With our utmost sincerity, we would like to present a token of our love and well-wishes from Tzu Chi volunteers all around the world.

Tzu Chi is here with you and will help you survive this disaster and get back to normality. Let us heal the pain and suffering and bring out our innate courage and perseverance. I believe with a positive outlook, you can restore your homes and be back to normal soon.

Let us pray sincerely for everyone to be safe and well, for our society to be harmonious, and no more disasters. May joy and freedom be with you. May you find peace everywhere.

Tzu Chi is a Buddhist charity organization active in humanitarian relief. Founded in Taiwan, its scope of services has expanded to around the world since its inception in 1966. Under the guiding principle of discipline, diligence, frugality, endurance, and combined with the Buddhist spirit of loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and selfless giving, Tzu Chi volunteers serve people in need in their local communities.

I'm very grateful to our US volunteers. For more than 20 years, they have been there for their communities and the nation with selfless Great Love in time of major crisis or family hardship. Their only wish is to offer a helping hand to the people in need, to relieve them of their sufferings, and to bring their smiles back. When a catastrophic natural disaster occurs, they'll exert their selfless Great Love, the spirit of a Bodhisattva, to the people affected. When there is a need, our volunteers will be with you all along the way from immediate response to long-term recovery.

In recent years, we bear witness to a trend that natural disasters are occurring more frequently, causing devastation and disruption to people's lives. If we observe this nature phenomenon closely, we'll realize that the root cause really comes from our lifestyle.

7-2 : Excerpt from Article "***Caring for Our Planet, Our Home***" from Global Tzu Chi Website at http://tw.tzuchi.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1022%3Acaring-for-our-planet-our-home&catid=114%3Areflections-on-our-times&Itemid=325&lang=en

In Malaysia there's a family of four who, for over 30 years, used to run a noodle shop selling meat noodles. They turned to vegetarianism and switched to selling vegetarian food, despite a decline of earnings as well as customers. In Taiwan, a volunteer who was running a very lucrative business selling disposable tableware closed it down, forgoing the profit. What made these people change?

These are people who love the environment and Mother Nature. They're making adjustments to their lives so they can better protect the Earth. This is because they understand how our life is connected to Mother Nature and how our daily lifestyle impacts the environment—something that

Dharma Master Cheng Yen often tells us. Below is a summary of the connections and impacts that Dharma Master Cheng Yen has spoken about, which can open our eyes to why it is important to care for our planet, our home.

Our Earth is a very beautiful planet. Among all the planets in the universe, the Earth is the loveliest, with mountains, oceans, and all manner of environments, each a home to many kinds of creatures. Mother Earth sustains all life on it, including us humans. She provides all the food we eat and the material goods we use.

But her health is declining and she's losing her ability to protect and provide for the creatures living on the land. Natural disasters, such as floods, mudslides, wildfires, drought, and earthquakes, cause damage to the Earth. Crops are destroyed as a result of drought or flooding, leading to food shortages and famine. People lose their lives and their homes as a result of natural disasters. Mother Nature can no longer provide a safe environment for us to live in.

Global warming is causing natural disasters to happen more frequently. The rising of the Earth's temperature has disrupted the order of Nature, resulting in abnormal climates and natural disasters. The increasing global temperature is caused by greenhouse gases in the atmosphere trapping the Earth's heat. Despite the call by the United Nations to industrialized nations to cut down on their greenhouse gas emissions, in the past few years, we've seen a continued increase of greenhouse gases. If this goes on, our planet will continue undergoing destruction, jeopardizing the lives of all creatures, including us humans.

What can we do to help?

Did you know that eating meat contributes to over half of the greenhouse gases? World Watch Institute has reported that 51% of greenhouse gases are attributed to livestock and their byproducts¹. If we can cut down on our meat consumption, we can help reduce the problem. Mother Earth supports a very large human population of seven billion. Imagine how much food we have to eat every day. For example, a whole chicken can be eaten in just one meal, but it takes months to raise. Imagine how many animals need to be raised in order to feed people. Raising animals, such as chickens, pigs, and cows, produces wastes, such as excrement and methane gas. Scientific research has found that methane is much more potent in warming our planet than carbon dioxide. Due to the increase in human population, meat consumption has increased five-fold in the past 50 years, and so, the amount of greenhouse gases has also greatly increased. This is why scientists are telling us that the quickest way to mitigate global warming is to eat vegetarian.

For a long time, Dharma Master Cheng Yen has been urging people to eat vegetarian. By not eating meat, it helps nurture kindness and compassion in our heart, as we don't take the lives of animals. Vegetarian food is also good for our health. And now scientists are telling us that eating vegetarian can save the Earth. By eating vegetarian, our demand for meat will decrease. Hence, farms won't need to raise so many livestock. When the number of livestock is reduced, greenhouse gases associated with raising animals will also reduce. Therefore, to help our planet and the whole of mankind, it's necessary that we eat vegetarian and encourage other people to do it too.

It can go a long way toward protecting our environment and caring for the Earth.

7-3 : Excerpt from Article "***The Compassionate Prince Kunala***" from the book "*The Master Tells Stories*"

King Usika was a devoted Buddhist. One day, the king asked a monk named Yasa about the Buddhist teachings. Yasa looked at the young prince. "Human life is impermanent," he said. "A body goes through the stages of birth, aging, illness and death, and human life is filled with impurity. Who can have the beauty of youth forever? All these are illusions. In the same way, although the prince's eyes seem beautiful, they are actually full of filth and the source of trouble."

The prince was quite puzzled. Everyone always praised him for his beautiful eyes, but why would the monk say that they were dirty and the source of trouble?

There were many concubines in the king's palace. One young lady was deeply attracted by Kunala's good looks, trying to seduce him. He freed himself from her unwanted attentions. Later, King Usika found a wife for him. When the concubine saw the lover of her dreams married to someone else, she became intensely jealous and her love turned to hatred.

Not long after, the king became sick and the young concubine looked after him carefully until he recovered. He was grateful and said to her, "Because you took care of me for such a long time, I will give you anything you desire."

She said, "I just want to rule the country for seven days."

When she was on the throne, the young lady wrote a letter filled with both love and hate to Prince Kunala. She wrote that her fury would only be placated if she never saw his eyes again. Now the prince finally realized what that monk had meant. The lady's word was like the king's command, and it couldn't be disobeyed.

Kunala reluctantly gouged out one eye and held it in his hand. "It is so disgusting," he suddenly realized. "Why would such a filthy little thing be praised by so many people and bring so much trouble?" When both eyes were gone, everything before him was in total darkness, but he felt the peace that comes from spiritual exaltation.

When his wife heard the news, she started to wail with grief. But the prince was calm and consoled her. "Human life is brief, so don't harbor hatred or worry, because hatred and worry are your greatest enemies."

A bodyguard warned, "Your Highness, if you stay in the palace, your life will be in danger." The prince didn't want the court lady to continue making bad karma for herself by doing something even worse, he and his wife fled. They learned to play the lute and to sing, and they wandered from town to town, making music in the streets. People would throw them a few coins, and in this way, the prince and his wife were able to feed themselves.

One day, they wandered into the streets alongside the palace and started to sing. When King Usika heard the beautiful but mournful songs, he thought of his son, who had suddenly disappeared years before.

When the king saw how Prince Kunala had fallen from his royal life and was only a blind lute-player singing on the streets for a living, the king was very upset. "Who did this to you?" he asked the prince. But Kunala just told his father about the truths that he had learned, hoping his father would calm down.

At last, the ministers and the guards reported the truth to the king. He was furious and wanted to execute that concubine, but the prince begged his father to forgive her. The king was touched by Kunala's compassion and released the young lady. However, in her own conscience, she was ashamed of herself and finally committed suicide. Because of her impure love, she had created trouble and hatred, hurt another person and destroyed herself. Was it all worth it?

If love could be pure and calm and nurture all creatures like clean water, it would be wonderful. I often say that we must guard our minds to bring the spirit of great love into full force. We must be careful not to let our minds become confused or filled with hatred. Above all, we must not let our minds become tainted with filthy desires.

7-4 : Excerpt from Article "**Wholesome Friends**" from the book "*The Power of the Heart*"

In life, we need wholesome friends beside us. Not only can they provide guidance, support and encouragement; they also set a good example for us. There is a story from the Buddha's time which highlights how important having wholesome friends is.

One day, when the Buddha and his disciples were out on a journey, they saw a string on the path. The Buddha asked one of his disciples to pick it up, and the disciple tentatively did so with his thumb and forefinger. Seeing this, the Buddha asked why he did not hold the string more firmly.

He replied honestly, "Buddha, it really stinks."

"Why does the string stink?" the Buddha asked.

"Perhaps it was once used to tie fish," the disciple guessed, "and the bad smell came from the fish."

"The fish is long gone," the Buddha noted, "so why does this string still smell so bad?"

"It must have been used to tie the fish for long enough to absorb the smell," the disciple offered.

The Buddha agreed, "The fish and the string were once together, but are now apart, yet the string still has the smell of the fish on it. You can think about this more."

Continuing on their journey, they soon saw a piece of wrapping on the path. The Buddha asked the same disciple to pick it up. The disciple did so with a smile on his face. "You seem very happy to find this wrapping," the Buddha observed.

"Yes, Buddha. It smells pleasant, like sandalwood."

The Buddha smiled back and said, "It's a piece of wrapping. Why do you speak of sandalwood?"

"Well," replied the disciple, "it must have been used to wrap sandalwood for it to smell like sandalwood. And although it isn't used to wrap the wood anymore, its scent lingers."

The Buddha seized the occasion to offer a teaching, "Yes. We human beings are exactly like the string and the wrapping; if we often mix with wayward friends, it will be hard not to be influenced by them. If we are surrounded by wholesome friends, we will have them as good examples to follow."

I remember a case that illustrated this when I visited Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital some time ago. Entering the busy lobby, I saw a young man sitting in a wheelchair, accompanied by a Tzu Chi volunteer who seemed very kind and gentle. Walking toward them I found that the young man's body was covered with tattoos, and the pattern extended to his hands and palms.

I was very curious about why he had been admitted to the hospital, so I bent down to meet his eyes and speak to him. It turned out he had been injured in a fight after getting drunk with some friends. I patted his hand in encouragement, and seeing the openness and sincerity in his eyes, I told him, "You are still young and have your whole life ahead of you. Do you really want to spend your precious time that way, getting drunk with friends and getting into fights?"

I encouraged him to think on it and told him, "It would be wonderful if the next time we meet, it turned out that you were there as a volunteer helping others."

He nodded and gave me a timid smile. I smiled back and said, "Best wishes to you."

One day, sometime later, I saw him on a Da Ai TV program, being introduced as a dedicated Tzu Chi recycling volunteer. He told the interviewer about meeting me and how my words and the encouragement from Tzu Chi volunteers inspired him to lead a more meaningful life.

It wasn't easy to begin anew. Knowing this, he kept in close contact with Tzu Chi volunteers and started volunteering at a Tzu Chi recycling station. He spent whatever time he could there, turning down his old friends' invitations to join them in their activities.

At the recycling station, he was surrounded by people of good character and received a great deal of support and encouragement from them. In this wholesome environment, his conviction to change was firm. He gave up smoking, drinking, and drugs.

7-5 : Excerpt from Article ***"Everyone in Harmony, Elders Enjoy Final Years in Peace"*** from the book *"The Essence of Filial Piety"*

The Gao family on Yangmin Mountain in Taipei is one true example of passing down the legacy of love.

Mr. Gao worked diligently and frugally to build his family, fully understanding what is meant by "blessing shall the generous be." Whenever hikers came up the mountain, he enthusiastically prepared meals or snacks for them to relieve their fatigue. Some hikers had heard that there were tasty bamboo shoots on Yanmin Mountain, so they ventured up the mountain just to dig the bamboo shoots, unaware that these bamboos had been planted by the Gao family. Nonetheless, Mr. Gao would still invite them to eat at his house. His daughter-in-law was a bit reluctant to cook for hikers who had taken away their bamboo shoots. But she followed the will of her father-in-law. The Gao brothers behaved the same way, as long as it made their father happy, they were fine with it.

Although times had changed drastically, Mr. Gao still followed the teachings of older generations and taught his children and grandchildren the ways of ancient saints and sages. Mr. Gao's oldest son can still recite from the classics. His second son cannot, but he still knows how to use Taiwanese proverbs in a humorous way.

The Gao siblings have always treated their oldest brother with the same respect they showed their father, and the brothers all treat one another with love and respect. The most amazing thing is that the sisters-in-law all get along, too. In other families, oftentimes brothers have good relationships to begin with , but they later turn against one another because of their wives' gossip. The Gao brothers, however, are blessed. The sisters-in-law are all amiable to one another and the family lives in harmony. Because of this, even after Mr. Gao passed away, all his sons and their wives still stayed together as a family. When they encounter a problem, they do not blame one another or avoid their responsibilities. Instead, they shoulder their burdens together and encourage one another.

Some of the brothers emigrated to the United States, yet they would still go back to Taiwan frequently to take care of their elderly mother. They would accompany her for daily trail walks in the early morning and tell her stories from time to time. Their mother lived her golden years carefree, healthy, happy, and never lonely.

Not only are these brothers filial, they are also devoted to helping others. Mingshan Gao, the third son, persuaded his brothers to join Tzu Chi after he first became involved. But there was one incident in early 2005 that still pains me. At the time, there were charity and construction projects ongoing in Guizhou, China, and there was news that Typhoon Haitang had affected mainland China as well. So I asked Mr. Gao to go assess the situation.

Mama Gao was still feeling fine when her son left Taiwan with her consent. However, before he reached his destination, he received news of her mother's passing. Although grief-stricken, Mr. Gao was relieved to learn that his mother, who was over ninety years old, had passed away peacefully, and that all their family members and many Tzu Chi volunteers were by her side to take care of her funeral arrangements. Knowing that his disaster assessment assignment was a good deed that had received his mother's blessing, he calmed his mind and was determined to finish his job as soon as possible, so as to relieve the suffering of the poor villagers. Even though he did not get to say goodbye to his mother, he was able to come back home within seven days of her passing, in line with the Chinese tradition.

Our body comes from our parents. Mr. Gao utilizes his body that his mother gave him to do good deeds and benefit all beings. The fact that he did not abandon his task to rush back after his mother's death demonstrates that he is creating good affinities and accumulating merits for his mother. This kind of great filial piety surpasses individual love.

All the members of the Gao family work together and dedicate themselves to good deeds and filial piety. Theirs is indeed an exemplary family.