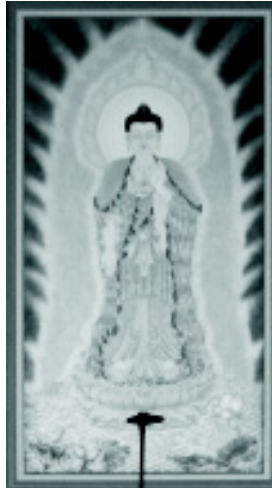


# 跑西方不落後

## Don't Fall Behind Running Towards the West



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當許許多多的人還在百貨公司裏忙著為選購適當的聖誕禮物作最後的衝刺、或忙著參加接二連三的聖誕派對時，萬佛聖城一年一度的彌陀七在十二月二十三日清晨開始了。

同修和我在聖城已住了幾年了，但這還是第一次我們有機會一起參加佛七。因我們倆都各有一位九十多歲的母親，所以我們都利用學校放假的時間去探望她們，而佛七總是在寒假期間舉行，因此我們無法參加。現在兩位母親已先後往生，半年前我們已決定這次佛七，我們要全程參加。

從來連一整天的佛七都沒打過，這次就想要打全程，想來自己都要擔心了。第一，光是從早上五點起床到晚上快十點回家，中間只有半小時休息，一連七天，屬於銀髮族的我們有這體力嗎？第二，一天盤坐六次，每次一個小時，一連七天，兩條腿受得了嗎？第三，一連七天，基本上什麼其他的事都不做，只是念佛，做得到嗎？能專心嗎？有這些挑戰是知道的，但也只有試試看才會知道答案。所以我們也就決定不要想太多了，盡心盡力去嚐試就是了。更何況我們很想親身體會一下，一連七天，什麼其他的事

Early in the morning on December 23, 2007, while most people were still rushing around in the department stores attempting to finish some last minute Christmas shopping, or hopping from one Christmas party to the next, the Sagely City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (CTTB) began its annual Amitabha Buddha Recitation.

While my husband and I have lived in CTTB for several years now, this was the first time we had a chance to participate in this recitation together. In the past, both of us had mothers in their nineties and we always went to visit them during school vacations. The seven-day Amitabha Buddha Recitation has always been held during the second part of December, which coincides with the school's winter break, and hence we were not around to take part in it. Now both of our mothers have passed away, and we made the decision six months ago to fully participate in this Amitabha Buddha Recitation.

However, we worried about whether we could participate for the full seven days. First of all, we would need to get up at 5:00 am and we would not be back home until almost 10:00 pm, with barely a 30-minute break at noon during the seven days. Would senior citizens like us have the stamina to do it? Secondly, would our legs survive the six hour long sits per day for seven days? Thirdly, could life-long busy bees like us really just sit and do nothing other than reciting Buddha's name for seven days? Would we be able to concentrate? We were fully aware of all these challenges, but we would not know the answer until we tried it. So we decided not to think about it any further and just resolved to do our best. We really looked forward to getting a first-hand experience of doing nothing but reciting Buddha's name.

都不做，只是念佛，會有什麼感受？

佛七第一天早上，走進佛殿，看到參加的人很多，連最後一排都站了人。心裏還在想，也許因為今天是周末，所以人特別多。後來發現因為是聖誕節，所以大多數的人至少打了前三天，有的回去上了兩天班又回來繼續，有些人是來打最後三天。總之，整個七天佛殿的人都是滿滿的。有人說，這次佛七人特別多。而且還有些西方人來參與，從年長的到年輕的都有。有些靜靜的聽我們唱誦，有些參與我們繞念的行列，有些甚至於與我們一起坐念與默念，或參加在往生堂的迴向。

這次打佛七的人最年長的是九十歲，最年幼的是四歲。並有幾位育良小學的小學生打了全程，真是令人佩服，這些孩子將來一定前途無量。那位四歲的小弟弟，在大家默念時，也能安安靜靜的，一聲不響，也真是難得。

就這樣，開始我們的第一個佛七。法會在唱香讚與誦《佛說阿彌陀經》後就開始繞念，和晚課類似，接著是盤坐默念。坐念到最後十分鐘，兩條腿痠得真是難以忍受，只好邊揉腿邊念佛，就這樣度過了佛七的第一天，成績只能說是堅持下來了，沒有知難而退罷了。不過，也有一個附帶的收穫，就是坐了一天以後，深深體會到這一年來疏忽了對身體的保養，所以氣血比較不通暢，所以打起坐來比較辛苦。好在有這即時的警告，後來我們每天作一些拉筋的暖身運動，以及用指壓法揉開那些氣血阻塞的「結」。到最後三天，就可以坐得直挺挺的專心念佛了。

在這七天裏，每天都得到一些關心我們的法師的指點。例如，我們起初以為下午四點四十五分往生堂迴向是每天的「句點」，不知道晚上九點以後還有大迴向，所謂的「跑西方」。幸好有位法師提醒我們大迴向的義意，為甚麼是很殊勝的，一定要參加。法師還慈悲的加一句：「一天下來如果太累的話，可以先回去休息一下；但是大迴向一定要參加。」第二天晚上，我們參加了大迴向，果然非常殊勝。大家起早摸黑的精進一整天了，精神

When we walked into the Buddha Hall on the first morning, we were amazed that the Buddha Hall was pretty full that even the last rows were taken. We thought that, like most of our recitations, there would be a lot more people on the weekends than on weekdays. But later we realized that because of the Christmas holiday, most people actually stayed for at least three days; some of them went back to work for a couple days and came back to finish the session; and some people came for the last three days. Therefore, the Buddha Hall was full the whole seven days. Many people were commenting that there were a lot more people this year than before. In addition, quite a few westerners of all ages came and participated. Some of them just sat quietly in the chairs at the back and listened to the recitation; some of them joined us for walking recitation; some of them participated in sitting recitation and the transference of merit.

The ages of the participants ranged from four to 90 years old. A few Instilling Goodness Elementary School students participated for the full seven days. It is really admirable, and these kids' future will undoubtedly be limitless. The four-year-old little boy kept himself quiet without a sound while everyone else was meditating. That was also very amazing.

Here are our experiences of our first Amitabha Buddha Recitation. Following the singing of Incense Praise and reciting The Buddha Speaks of Amitabha Sutra, we started the walking recitation, similar to what we normally do in the evening recitations, and then we sat down for the sitting recitation. Toward the last 10 minute of every sit, our legs became unbearably sore, and I could not help but massage them in an attempt to ease the soreness while trying hard to focus on recitation. This was pretty much how we got through our first day of Amitabha Buddha Recitation. How well did we do? All we can say is that we persevered and did not quit even though it was quite difficult. There was a side benefit though. After sitting in half lotus for most of the day, we could feel how our physical condition had deteriorated during the last few years as a result of slacking off on our health routine. The blockage of the energy flow in several places in the legs made sitting much more challenging. Given this timely warning, we started a routine of doing some yoga and warm up exercises as well as some pressure point massage to open up these blockages. By the fourth day, we could sit with our back straight and concentrate on the recitation.

Almost everyday during the session we received some pointers on recitation from the compassionate Dharma Masters. For example, on the first day, we thought that the Transference of Merit in the Rebirth Hall was the end for the day and didn't know there was a Great Transference of Merit at around 9:00 pm, the so called 'Running to the West'. Luckily a Dharma Master kindly explained to us the meaning of the Great Transference of Merit, and the reason why it's very important that we participate in it. The compassionate Dharma Master added, "You may want to get some rest after a long day, but make sure that you come to the Great Transference of Merit." We participated in the Great Transference of Merit at the end of the second day, and really experienced what the Dharma Master told us. We were amazed that after such a long day everyone was still so energetic and in such good spirits 'running to the west'; all were singing loud and clear with a very quick tempo matching the running speed. The vibration of the three

都還那麼興奮，「跑西方」跑得如此的開心。唱的節奏又快、聲音又大、打成一片。最後的三下大殿鐘聲更是通天貫地，扣人心旋，似乎打破了一切時空的隔閡。

專心念佛最大的敵人是打妄想。一不小心就變成散心念佛了，也就是口裏念著佛號，可是腦子裏雜念不斷。法師告訴我們念佛有種種法門，有觀想念佛、觀相念佛、實相念佛、持名念佛。每個人選最能使自己集中、專注的法門。法師說她知道有許多人，包括她自己在內覺得「持名念佛」法門很受用。也就是當我們念「南無阿彌陀佛」時，口裏要念得清清楚楚的、耳朵也聽得清清楚楚的、每念一個字腦子裏也要能清清楚楚的看到這個字。法師要我們試試這法門。我們試了以後才知道，剛開始時還真不容易做到呢！但一旦學會了，真是容易專心多了。

另一位法師教了我們一個默念的方法。他說默念時我們可以聽自己在心裏念佛的聖號，或者我們可以聽或回想屢次繞念與坐念時大眾的聲音。練習成習慣以後，漸漸得我們隨時隨地都能聽到這聲音。以上這兩個法門對要念到「一心不亂」會有很大的幫助的。

能與數百人一起很虔誠的、聚精會神的念佛，連續念七天，真是非常難能可貴！能量是如此的殊勝，音調是如此的和諧。念了幾天以後，真是好像隨時隨地都聽到這清淨的念佛聲。深深體會到，一連七天，什麼其他的事都不做，只是念佛，真能使人變得很清淨，頭腦也寧靜多了，對事情的輕重緩急更清楚了，覺得工作效率也提高了，真是收益良多。我們期待著2008年為期兩周的佛七，也希望將來像「禪三」一樣，每年能有兩個「佛三」。阿彌陀佛！

bell tolls really felt like that the sound was going to the center of the earth and the edge of the universe, and they removed all the separations of time and space.

The biggest enemy of reciting the Buddha's name in concentration is our false thoughts. We lose our concentration the minute a thought enters our mind. In other words, our mouth might still be reciting the Buddha's name while there is a stream of endless thoughts continuously going through our minds. The Dharma Master explained to us that there were several Dharma Doors to help us increase our concentration. They are 1) Mindfulness of the Buddha's real appearance; 2) Mindfulness of the Buddha through contemplating his image; 3) Mindfulness of the Buddha through contemplation; and 4) Mindfulness of the Buddha through reciting his name. The Dharma Master told us that she knew of many people, including herself, who found the 'mindfulness of the Buddha through reciting his name' dharma doors to be particular helpful. Here is how to do it: When we are reciting 'Na Mo Amita Buddha,' we attentively pronounce every word clearly; our ears hear every sound clearly, and our mind sees every Chinese character we are reciting very clearly. She encouraged us to try this method. To our surprise, this method sounded pretty straightforward, however, it's was not as easy as it seemed. But once we got the hang of it, it really was a lot easier to focus while reciting.

Another Dharma Master taught us how to do silent recitation. He said that we could focus on hearing our own voice reciting the Buddha's name in silence; or we could try to hear/recall the voice of recitation of the group while we were doing the walking recitation. After we have mastered this second way, gradually we will be able to hear that voice any time and any place. These two excellent dharma doors sure will help us reach the state where our mind is concentrated and disciplined.

Reciting the Buddha's name with the utmost sincerity and concentration together with several hundred people for seven days in a row sure was a rare and awesome experience. The energy was divine and the sound was so harmonious. After having recited for just a few days, it sure feels like we can hear that pure and serene sound anytime and any place. We got the answer to the question of, "What would it be like if we did absolute nothing except reciting Buddha's for seven days?" It really makes us become a lot more serene and calm; our clarity is enhanced; our priorities become much clearer; and our productivity seems increased as well. We look forward to the two weeks Amitabha Buddha Recitation at the end of 2008. We also hope that, like the two three-days Chan sessions a year, there will be a couple of three-days Amitabha Buddha Recitation sessions during the year. Amitabha!

