

# How to Start a Bowing Practice

An excerpt from an interview conducted with Dharma Master Heng Lai at Buddha Root Farm, Oregon, Summer 2016  
Chinese translation by Yaping Wang and Angela Morelli

**DM Lai:** Let me explain how this relates to taking refuge with the Triple Jewel. Heng Sure Shi, Heng Lyu Shi, myself, and the elder nuns decided that we won't take disciples ourselves, because we're nowhere close enough to be a...teacher! [Laughs] We set it up so that we represent the Master during a refuge ceremony. And because we're here to represent him, we follow his rules, how he let his disciples take refuge.

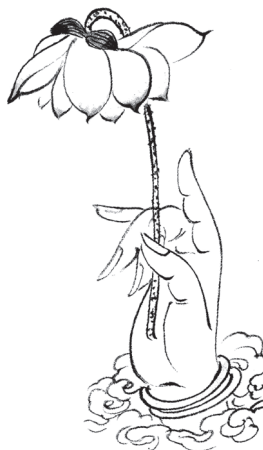
He used to do a whole group, sometimes hundreds, even thousands of people at once when we went to Taiwan. But then he changed his rules later. He said, "From now on people who want to take refuge with me have to do a little work. They can't just take refuge and walk around with their little refuge books saying 'I'm a Shifu's disciple.'" He said you gotta at least make ten thousand bows to the Buddha sometime in your lifetime. You don't have to do it tomorrow. But you've got to do it. You've got to make a sincere effort to make ten thousand bows to the Buddha. You can set a time every day and bow every day. That's one way to do it. You could just do it in big blocks if you want. Just keep track of what you're doing. And that's one of his main requirements—as far as I know, no other teachers do that.

We keep that model going; people who take refuge should practice. So a lot of people do that. Though they're very busy during the day, when they come home or before they go to work they'll set aside a certain amount of time and say, "OK, I'll just bow to the Buddhas here and keep track of it." Some people just go to Wan Fo Cheng (City of Ten

## 拜佛入門

節選 2016 年佛根地禪修營的恒來法師專訪

王亞平 · 李俊 中譯



**來法師：**我要先說明這(拜佛)跟皈依三寶的關係，實法師、律法師、我，還有資深比丘尼們都決定自己不收弟子，因為我們覺得自己不夠資格作老師，因此我們決定只是代表師父來打皈依。因為代表他，所以我們沿用他的規矩，看他是如何給弟子打皈依的。

師父多數是給一群人皈依，有時上百甚至上千，例如去臺灣弘法的時候。後來師父改變了皈依的條件，他說：「從今以後，想皈依我的人必須做點功課。不可以皈依以後，就拿著皈依證到處說：『我現在是師父的弟子了。』」師父說你這一生必須拜佛至少一萬拜。你不需要明天就開始，但是你一定要做。你必須要很誠心地拜完這一萬拜，你可以每天抽出一點時間來拜，這是一種方法。你也可以一次就拜完一萬拜，總之你知道自己在做什麼就行。這是師父要求的一個主要條件，據我所知，沒有其他人會這樣要求。

所以我們把這個規矩傳承下來，所有皈依的人都要去做。很多人都聽話照做，儘管他們白天非常忙，但是下班回家或者每天上班前，會預留一段時間給自己：「好，我現在拜佛並且記錄下來。」有些人乾脆去聖城參加萬佛寶懺：「這樣一萬拜二十一天就可以拜完了。」事實上，很多人喜歡拜佛這個法門，所以他們乾脆就繼續拜，不管已經拜了一萬，還是一百萬拜，他們就是一直拜下去。

這是師父留下的一個法門，效果非常好。尤其是新人，聽到要拜一萬拜：「天哪，我做不到。」其實不是這樣，你不用一口氣全部拜完，你可以每天預留一點最佳時段，或者早上，或者晚上，或者早晚，就說：「好，我早點起床，用十分鐘到半小時，或者一小時的時間來拜佛。」諸如此類，任何你能擠出來的時

Thousand Buddhas) during the Ten Thousand Buddhas Repentance. They say, "I'll just do it there, do it all at once, on twenty three days and be done." But what happens is people really like the practice and over time they just keep doing it. They don't care whether they get ten thousand or a million, they will just keep bowing.

That's one of Shifu's instructions and it really works very well. People get kind of—especially new people—they get freaked out with ten thousand: “Oh my goodness, I can't do that.” But you don't have to do it all at once. So maybe that's what you can start working on. Just set a time of the day where it's best for you, either in the morning or in the evening or both. Say, “OK I'll get up a little early and I'll spend, you know, anywhere from ten minutes to half an hour or an hour bowing”, or something like that, whatever time slot you can fit in there. Or you can say, “well when I get off work I'll do it.” Or maybe you'll do both. You just set a pattern, sort of like you're going to the gym every day. You know, just get into the habit of doing it. And then you'll start—it'll just become part of you.

**Q:** And what am I doing with my mind? Do I need to know Buddha Name Number One, Buddha Name Number Two, or is it just, “Okay, I’m bowing to all Buddhas now,” one, two, three, four, five...?

**DM Lai:** Shifu went into that, I believe in his commentary to the Pure Land *Amitabha Sutra*, because that very question comes up from everybody. But basically, if you're correctly bowing to the Buddha, there's nothing in your mind except Amitabha. If you're bowing to ten thousand different Buddhas, like we do in the Ten Thousand Buddha Repentance, you recite a different Buddha each time. A lot of people just recite Amitabha and bow. There's only Amitabha. That's all your mind has when you're bowing.

Shifu always told us, actually there aren't five schools in Buddhism. There's just one. When the Buddha was in the world, there was no Pure Land school and Chan school. They didn't exist. They were made by people's attachments. Some people are attached to bowing, other people are attached to sitting, other people are attached to learning and studying. So they came up with these different schools to accommodate the proclivities of different people. Mine is—I'm attached to Chan. But now I don't care, because Shifu taught me over the years that they're all intertwined. When you're bowing, just that is Chan; when you're sitting, just that is Pure Land. You're basically trying to still your mind and what you're really trying to do is bring your mind to the present in your bowing, just like when you're sitting. The purpose is the same. You want to bring your mind to the present moment. "Be here now"—you've heard that phrase? Be here now. Don't run off somewhere else. That's what you are trying to accomplish when you bow. And then once you start "getting here now," you say, OK, I'm just going to be here now for these ten minutes that I bow. I can sacrifice that much time. I offer that up to all living beings. I'm going to really focus on being here now. I'll indulge in some false thinking later—but right now, I'm going to be here now.

So you do that and recite the Buddha's name. Now what's cool about bowing when you're reciting, especially if you're doing multiple Buddhas, is you have to pay attention to which one you're bowing to. That keeps you a

問都行。或者說：「我下班之後再來拜。」或者兩個時段都拜。方法就是建立一個規律模式，讓拜佛就像每天去健身房一樣，成為你的一種習慣，漸漸就會成為你的一部分。

**問題：**拜佛的時候應該想什麼？我  
知道這是某某佛，下一位是某某佛……？  
還是，就頂禮一切諸佛，一尊一尊地拜下  
去？

來法師：師父有講過這個，記得是在《阿彌陀經淺釋》裡，因為大家都有這個問題。基本上如果你真的在拜佛，腦子裡就只有阿彌陀佛，其它什麼都沒有，如果你拜阿彌陀佛的話。或者你是拜一萬尊不同的佛，好像萬佛寶懺那樣，每次就念一尊不同的佛名。很多人會一邊念阿彌陀佛，一邊拜佛。拜著拜著，你腦子裡就只有阿彌陀佛了。

師父常常告訴我們，事實上佛法並沒有五宗，佛法只有一個。佛陀在世的時候，沒有淨土宗、禪宗，這些根本不存在，它們是因為人類的執著而產生的。有些人執著拜佛，有些人執著打坐，有些人執著於學教，所以才出現這些不同的宗派來接引不同的根機。我自己是喜歡禪，但現在我不這麼在意，因為師父不斷地教我們：門門都是相通的。拜佛的時候，也是參禪；打坐的時候，也是修行淨土。拜佛就是把心靜下來，把心帶回當下，也就像打坐一樣。「活在當下」——聽過這個話沒有？請你活在當下，心不要跑到別處去了，這就是拜佛要達到的目標。一旦你開始要「活在當下」，你就對自己說：「好吧，拜佛的這十分鐘我要活在當下。我願意犧牲這些時間，把它供養給一切眾生。我要全心專注於當下，妄想可以等會兒再打，但是現在我要活在當下。」

拜佛的時候，你也在念佛。一邊拜佛一邊念佛有一個好處，特別是當你拜很多尊不同的佛，你就必須注意拜的是哪尊佛。用意就是讓你的心有事情可做，這會比坐禪還忙，因為你的心在做事情，在用功，你知道你必須注意你面前的這尊佛，所以

When you find yourself lost in thought when you're bowing, you gotta stop and say, "OK, this is our special time. I'm going to set that aside for now. I need to focus on the present. I need to focus on the Buddha and bowing."

當察覺到念頭跑掉時，你就停下來，告訴自己：「這是一個特別的時段，我要把雜念放一邊，我要專注在當下，專注在佛號與拜佛上」。

but the Buddha that you're reciting. You just have this light. You become... everywhere—everything everywhere is Amitabha, or whatever Buddha you're bowing to. That's an inconceivable state, of which I cannot explain to you because I have yet to achieve it. But that's a very high state of bowing. You have no self at that point. There is no "you" anymore. There's no "me," there's no "I," it's all disappeared and disintegrated. That's a Buddha-bowing Samādhi. You've entered it, you've achieved the way through bowing Buddha.

But to begin with, you just want to bring yourself to the present. At first, you're not going to have all that popping off unless your roots are incredible. So you're going to just start bowing and just try to bring yourself to the present and put all this other junk that's going on in your life aside for whatever number of minutes you can pull it off. When you first start you might be able to get away with maybe five minutes or so. Maybe one minute, I don't know. But later you might get good at it as you do it. You get into the rhythm of it and you just say, "OK this is our time. Me and the Buddha. At the end of this time I can go off and do whatever I need to do and worry about what I need to worry about. But for this point, this is our pure place. I don't want to be indulging in a lot of false thinking. I just want to focus on the Buddha's name and bow."

So you might want to try it with a small block of time at first. Don't try to push yourself into the deep end of the pool. Don't say "OK. I'm going to bow for five hours and then see how I do." No, no, no, whoa! [Laughs] You might want to try a little...something you can actually chew, you know. If you've never bowed before, just do five or ten minutes. Then extend it. "I can do that," and then the next day you say, "Well, maybe I can kick up another five, ten minutes," you know, whatever you can seriously be able to do. And then when you find yourself lost in thought when you're bowing, you gotta stop and say, "OK, this is our special time. I'm going to set that

little busy, your mind—more than sitting there in Chan trying to be still. It's doing something. It's working on something. You know, you have a Buddha to pay attention to. And so that's another good thing about it. Or even if you're just reciting, say, Amitabha's name. At least you're reciting that name with your mind, even with your mouth. You can do it vocally if you wish. Most people bow silently, but some people like to recite it out loud and bow. In the privacy of their own home they can do that. Both are OK.

But that's your initial practice. Later, when you really start getting accomplishment, real accomplishment, you get this light going on inside you and you're just...there's nothing in your mind

這是一個好處。即使只是念阿彌陀佛的名號，至少你的心甚至你的嘴都在念佛。如果願意的話，你還可以念出聲來。很多人安靜地拜佛，也有人喜歡一邊出聲念佛一邊拜，在自己家裡兩種方法都可以。

前面說的是剛入門，之後當你拜佛拜得相應，真正有感應道交的時候，你內心會有一種光明——你的心中除了你念的那尊佛以外，什麼都沒有，只有這種光。你變得沒有一個地方不是阿彌陀佛，一切一切都是阿彌陀佛，或者是你在拜的那尊佛。那是一種不可思議的境界，我也無法解釋給你聽，因為我自己還沒到這個境界。但那是拜佛的一個很高的境界。那時候你已經沒有「我」了，也沒有「你」了，「我」消失、分解了。這就是入了禮佛三昧，所以拜佛也能讓你得到三昧。

但是你要先讓自己活在當下，你不會一開始就達到這些境界，除非你根器不凡。所以你的工作就是開始拜佛，努力把自己拉回當下一刻，把心裡所有的垃圾放在一旁，能放多久就放多久。當你最開始拜佛的時候，也許你只能專注五分鐘而已，也許只有一分鐘，我也不知道。但如果你堅持下去，就可能有進步，你就能掌握拜佛的節奏：「好的，這是我們的時間，我與佛的時間，這段時間結束後我可以休息，再去做任何我需要做的事情，操心我需要操心的事情。但是此時此刻，這是我們的淨土。我不想沈溺在太多的妄想中，我只想專注在佛號與拜佛上。」

所以你可以從一小段時間開始，不要一開始把自己逼得太狠，不要說：「好，我就拜五個小時，看看我做得怎麼樣。」不、不、不要那樣（笑聲）。從你能承受的一段時間開始，如果你從沒拜過佛，可以先拜五分鐘或者十分鐘，然後逐漸增加。「我可以做到」，然後隔天你又想：「嗯，也許可以再拜個五到十分鐘」，或者任何你可以認真做到的時間。當察覺到念頭跑掉時，你就停下來，告訴自己：「這是一個特別的時段，我要把雜念放一邊，我要專注在當下，專注在佛號與拜佛上。」

問題：對此我有一個很現實的問題。一旦



aside for now. I need to focus on the present. I need to focus on the Buddha and bowing.”

**Q:** I have a mundane question for you on this. Once you start counting the ten thousand bows, can you count every single bow you do during the day? Or can you only count the bows in the special bowing time?

**DM Lai:** No, you just keep track of how many times you bow—to the Buddha.

**Q:** OK, so all bows to the Buddha count?

**DM Lai:** Yeah. If you want to really get—you know, somebody will say, “Well I’m going to go visit the temple and I’m gonna bow; I’m going to the Buddha hall and I’m gonna bow to the Buddha—well I’m gonna count those, too. I want to get through this ten thousand. So I’m going to count them.” [Laughing] If you want... The Buddhas go, “Wow, this guy’s a real cheapskate.” [All laugh] What you’re really doing is, you’re not bowing to some deity, you’re bowing to your true nature. That’s what you’re really doing. Because you forget: you have the Buddha nature. You have a Buddha inside you. That’s what you’re really bowing to. You’re bowing to get all the obstructions out of the way so you can see that Buddha. So you can realize that Buddha.

So you can say, in a sense, you’re bowing to yourself. Only you’re drawn to your true self, not your false self. But you’re also bowing to all Buddhas throughout all periods, because when you become a Buddha, or up close to being one, like a Guanyin or a Manjushri, it’s like this, it’s like interpenetrating. You’re just all like a gigantic symphony. You all work in harmony as one. There is no them and me and others. You don’t have a self; it’s gone. I mean, literally shattered. You just don’t—you could say the word “I” and it has no meaning to you. When we say “I” or “me,” we’re thinking “I’m talking about myself.” Me, myself, and I, the three, the three

wonderful persons. No, they don’t exist. When you shatter that, as Amitabha used to say, that—just that—is the Pure Land.

Shifu used to tell us, when Buddhism first came to China, the Chinese people were the same way, they were very, very arrogant, didn’t want to bow to anybody, didn’t want to bow to Buddha. Westerners are the same way, because they just have no reference. We’re brought up from babies not to bow to anything. We don’t bow to no king or queen. We don’t have kings and queens. We don’t bow to nobody. We’re number one! We don’t bow to nothing! Shifu says, “Oh yeah? You’d better start bowing to your true nature. Get used to it. Get over yourself. Get over your false self.” ❀

You have the Buddha nature. You have a Buddha inside you. That’s what you’re really bowing to. You’re bowing to get all the obstructions out of the way so you can see that Buddha. So you can realize that Buddha.

你有佛性，你裡面有一尊佛，那才是你真正頂禮膜拜的對象。你拜佛是爲了清除所有的障礙，讓你能夠見到自己那尊佛而成就佛果。

開始拜一萬拜的時候，一天當中的每一拜都可以算進去嗎？還是只有特定拜佛的那個時段才算？

**來法師：**不用，你只需要記下你拜了多少次佛。

**問題：**所以拜的每一拜都算？

**來法師：**對，如果你真有辦法做到。有人會說：「我去廟裡也會拜佛，去佛殿也會拜佛，這些都要算進去，因為我想湊足一萬拜，所以這些都算。」（笑）如果你算得這麼清楚，那諸佛菩薩會說：「哇，這個人真小氣。」（眾笑）事實上，你所做的——你不是在拜哪一位天尊——你是在拜你的真如自性，那才是你真正在做的事。因為你忘記了——你有佛性，你裡面有一尊佛，那才是你真正頂禮膜拜的對象。你拜佛是爲了清除所有的障礙，讓你能夠見到自己那尊佛而成就佛果。

所以從某個角度來講，你是在拜你自己，只是你拜的是你的「真我」，而不是那個「假我」。但是你也在頂禮十方三世一切諸佛，因為當你成佛或者即將成佛的時候，就像觀世音菩薩、文殊師利菩薩，佛佛都是互相含攝的，就像一場大型演奏會一樣，大家在一起和諧地演奏，彷彿一個人一樣。沒有他們，沒有我，沒有別人。你沒有一個我，它消失了，我是說真正的粉碎了。你可以說「我」，但這個詞已經對你沒有意義了。當我們說「我」或「自己」的時候，我們會想到「我在談論我自己」。我、自、己，三個人，三個多麼美好的人。不是的，這些都不存在。當把它們都粉碎了的時候——就像阿彌陀佛所講的一樣——那就是淨土。

師父常跟我們說，佛法剛傳到中國的時候，中國人也是一樣非常非常地貢高我慢，不願意拜任何人，不願意拜佛。西方人也一樣，因為我們缺乏類似的經驗，從小到大我們沒有拜過任何人。我們沒有頂禮國王或者女王，因為我們根本就沒有國王或女王；我們誰也不拜，自己就是第一！我們什麼都不拜！師父說：「喔，是嗎？你最好開始禮拜你的真如自性。慢慢習慣去拜，不要自以爲是，要把你那個假我忘掉。」❀