



助人難

Helping Others Isn't Always Easy

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許多人以為，接受一些佛教觀念，念念經、拜拜佛。佛教就差不多站住了。

以前我也持這種觀點。記得1993第一次見到上人。我看社會表面上繁榮，裡面都爛了，就抱怨說：「佛菩薩為什麼不早來這裡度眾生？」他很大聲的訓斥：「你為什麼不抱怨大學裡面男女一起洗澡了？」許多年過去了，我漸漸發現，度人需要對方有信心，而且要能保持下去才會有效果。上人有能力立竿見影的令人生信，所以他不提這事。而現代人倫理道德的崩潰，卻會將他好不容易促成的度化因緣一次次前功盡棄，難以持續。

今天想分享一下我一個朋友念《地藏經》的感應，我們可以由此進一步瞭解這一問題。這是位50歲左右的男人，因念《地藏經》，得到許多感應。有了信心。可他不能守

Many people think that merely by accepting some commonly held Buddhist views, chanting the Buddha's name and bowing to the Buddha, then Buddhism could be established.

That is what I used to think. I remember the first time I met the Venerable Master in 1993. On the surface, I saw how society as a whole appeared to be prosperous, but it was actually rotting inside. So I complained, "Why haven't the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas come here to teach living beings sooner?" The Venerable Master scolded me loudly, saying, "Why don't you complain that men and women are showering together in universities?" Many years have passed since then, and I have gradually realized that, in order to effectively teach people, they must develop confidence, and this confidence must be continuous. (Externally, they must develop it in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Internally, they must have it in the teacher, the teaching, and in their own capacity to learn from the teacher and ultimately embody the teachings.) The Venerable Master had the ability to directly instill this confidence in people, so he did not mention this. Still, the breakdown of morality and virtue in society nowadays meant that the hard work that he had spent teaching them would often go to waste. Time after time, it would be difficult for the transformational causes and conditions

規矩，好好的因緣一下子崩潰了。

這個男人經常跑教堂。原來在一家小店打臨時工，缺錢用。要掙錢，就需要老闆給他安排上班的工時。本來我也沒機會勸動他來讀佛經。去年年初，機會來了。三藩市一帶，有個緬甸人生意不順利，找佛教解決問題。一位比丘尼告訴他，要唸49遍《地藏經》才行。這個人根本不會中文，他願意出錢，請人代念《地藏經》做功德回向，8美元一部。有朋友把消息轉到我這裡，我就跟我這個朋友商量，要不要唸6部——48美元。他很高興就答應了。我跟他講了一些這部經的靈感，他就去唸了。我們知道，英文《地藏經》不好唸。到處是長長的梵文轉成的英文生詞，他分好幾次讀讀停停才能完成一部。

過幾天讀完了，他告訴我，店裡的老闆打電話給他，讓他去上兩天的班。我鼓勵他繼續唸。沒多久，他告訴我，就這附近，沃瑪特對面，他找到一個全職的廚師職務，每週工作40小時。我跟兩位上人的老弟子談及此事，他們都認為，拿錢唸經，這樣修行不夠如法。

我算一算。開始的6部《地藏經》，功德迴向給出錢的人了。他收了費，剩下的功德應該不是很多了。另外他弄髒弄丟了好幾本《地藏經》，這也不太如法。好像是護法神配合上人度西方人的願力，對這邊的人特別優待。

大約是去年這個時候，發生了一件大事。他被診斷出肺癌，只能活一年左右，他不能繼續工作了，回家領救濟。也就是說，按預定的時間，現在他應該往生了。

癌症是有業障的。智者大師（538-597）將疾病分成幾類：四大不調，鬼神，禪病，業障病等。這個病如果能治，需要咒術，不是光靠中藥就可以奏效的。理論上是這麼講，現實中我

that he pulled together to be effective and lasting.

Today, I would like to share a story about the responses that one of my friends received from reciting the *Earth Store Sutra*, which will enhance our understanding of this issue. He was in his fifties when he received many responses from reciting the *Earth Store Sutra*. He developed confidence (and faith in the teachings), but was unable to follow the precepts, thereby cutting off his good causal conditions in one strike.

This man often went to the temple. He had a part-time job at a small store, and was a bit short on money. In order to earn money, he needed his boss to give him more hours. Originally, I did not have a chance to encourage him to recite Buddhist sutras. At the beginning of last year, my opportunity came. There was a Burmese man in San Francisco whose business was not going well, and wanted to find a solution inspired by the Dharma. A Bhikshuni told him that he would need to recite the *Earth Store Sutra* forty-nine times. Since this man did not know any Chinese, he was decided to pay someone else to recite the sutra and dedicate the merit on his behalf. He offered to pay eight dollars for each recitation. I learned about this offer from a friend, and asked my friend if he wanted to recite the sutra six times for forty-eight dollars. He happily agreed. I told him that miraculous responses have often resulted from reciting this sutra so he went ahead and started reciting. We know that the English translation of the *Earth Store Sutra* is not so easy to read. There are many long Sanskrit words that have been converted into new English equivalents. He divided it into sections, and it took many intervals to completely recite the entire sutra.

Once he finished reciting, he told me that his boss called him and asked him to work two additional shifts. I encouraged him to continue reciting. Shortly thereafter, he found a full-time job as a cook nearby, across from Walmart. I discussed this with two of the Venerable Master's senior disciples, and they both thought that reciting sutras for money was not proper cultivation. When I thought about it, the merit from his first six recitations of the *Earth Store Sutra* were dedicated to the person who paid him. After receiving payment, there probably wasn't much merit left over. In addition, he got quite a few copies of the *Earth Store Sutra* dirty, and even lost some copies, which was not very good either. It seemed as if the Dharma-protecting deities were facilitating the Venerable Master's vows to guide Westerners, by giving them special treatment.

也沒有機會看到具體的例子。為了幫助他，有的道友拿來些常見的抗癌食物、維他命B、薑黃之類的，還給他做念誦回向。沒多久，這個朋友來找我說，他變得精神很好，跟沒病一樣。癌雖然在，但是在消退。也不影響他。

他有這樣的感應，我們都很高興。可沒過多久問題就來了。求佛力加持，我們必須要守規矩。他病稍一好，就有女人來找他。他的家庭生活不穩定，這個女朋友跑了，又來一個。這就是上人所說的那個問題，或許是現代人難度的關鍵。我看到這種情況很擔心，跟他講些《地藏經》裡的規矩，說如果護法神不護了，他就完蛋了；還說那些能量是要治病用的，不能浪費等等。有一天，他來找我說，那些抗癌食物不靈了，病又回來了。我一猜就知道發生什麼事了，就問他，你又有女朋友了？他說，「只有一次，怎麼就被發現了呢？」

這就是剛開始我們談的情形。首先是信心。許多人根本沒有機會遇到真修行人。不知道聖智，連你作過一個夢都會知道。人們總是暗中希望僥倖過關。其次，我們修行，大規矩不能犯。佛菩薩雖然慈悲，但根本的規矩一犯所積的功德一樣潰散。

以後，他就去化療、放療，很痛苦。道友也給他做一些迴向。我們沒有再聽說以前那種顯著的感應故事了。不過現在，他已超過醫生預期的存活期了，而且病情相對穩定下來，又回到原來的餐館上班了。下一步如何發展，不清楚。這個具體的例子，帶給我們方方面面的啟發。

讀智者大師的治病分類，我們還是不清楚治療癌症的運作過程。

Last year, something significant happened. He was diagnosed with lung cancer, and had only about a year to live. He stopped working, and went home and was able to sustain his basic expenses with some assistance from the government. According to his doctors, he should be dead by now. Karmic obstacles are often an element in cancer cases. Great Master Zhi Zhe (智者 Zhizhě 538-597) classified illnesses into several categories: imbalances of the four elements, ghosts and deities, Chan sickness, karmic obstacles and so on. In order to cure his illness, some esoteric means needed to be employed. Chinese medicine alone was not be effective. This is true in theory, but I have not had the chance to see any actual examples of this. To help him, his Dharma friends gave him some common cancer-fighting foods, Vitamin B, turmeric, etc. They even chanted for him and dedicated the merit on his behalf. Shortly thereafter, this American disciple told me, “I feel much more energetic now, as if I were not sick. The cancer is still there, but it is in remission. It does not effect me anymore.”

We were all very happy for him and his miraculous response. However, it did not take long for different problems to arise. When we seek the Buddha's help, we need to follow the precepts. As soon as he began to recover, a woman came to find him. His family life became unstable. His girlfriend then left him, and later another one came along. The Venerable Master often says, this is perhaps the key to what makes people nowadays difficult to teach. I was very worried about his situation, and told him about some of the causes and their effects mentioned in the *Earth Store Sutra*. If the Dharma-protecting deities decided not to protect him anymore, then he would be dead. His energy needed to be used toward healing his illness, and should not be wasted. One day, he came and told me that the cancer-fighting foods were no longer effective; and his illness returned. I immediately knew what had happened. I asked him if he had gotten involved with any women. He said, “It was only one time. How did you know?”

This goes back to what we were saying at the beginning. First of all, there is the issue of confidence or faith. Many people do not have the chance to meet with true cultivators, true good and wise advisors. They do not know that through the wisdom of the sages that a sage is capable of knowing what happens even in your dreams. These people always hope to slip through the cracks. Furthermore, in our practice, we must not break major precepts. Even though the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are compassionate, once we break major precepts, the merit and virtue we have accumulated will be

這個人病情的一退一進，顯示出超度的決定性作用。超度有效時，精神先轉好，生理方面的問題還是要用藥。超度無效時，同樣的藥，沒有效力。

現在的人難度，不是不能度。上人講教育救國，辦學校，意義重大。就是要從下一代入手，幫助這個國家，樹立正確的倫理道德觀念。如果我們有機會和周圍的朋友溝通，就會知道，許多人也意識到這個問題了，但想法各異。

每個星期三，我們廟外面的中學生，一點多鐘就下課回家了，男女生在一起，許多家長也管不了。我跟一個美國老人討論如何處理這個社會問題，他是修小乘的佛教徒，他就不關心。他說，「我很慶幸，我不是年輕人。」

一個小郵局的局長，美國人。知道兒子如果跟人亂來生小孩，男女分手以後，就要一直付撫養金。跟他兒子說，「你如果亂來，這一輩子就毀了。」

還有個上人的老弟子，對兒子考慮得很多，要求兒子找的對象要「家世清白」。這是連對方父母的品行都考慮進去了。

不管怎麼說，以個人力量對抗社會風氣，很難。反過來看看我們的學校，如果學生能夠真心接受我們的道德理念，不要犯大的過失，以後他們到社會上，還真能帶去一股正面的能量。有這個基礎，我們談佛菩薩的感應，也不至於讓積累的功德毀於一旦。

然後我再想談談另一個題目，「念無常」。我們如果時時意識到人生無常，就會升起修行的緊

destroyed.

Afterwards, he underwent chemotherapy and radiation therapy, both of which were very painful. His Dharma friends prayed and dedicated merit to him. We did not hear of any obvious response stories like before. Now, however, he had already exceeded the life expectancy that his doctor predicted for him, and his illness was relatively stable. He has gone back to work at the same restaurant where he was working before. As for what happens next, I am not really sure. This real-life example which gives us many aspects to consider.

Reading the classification of illnesses by Great Master Zhi Zhe, we still cannot be clear about how cancer functions. The person in this example got better and then got worse, which is clear evidence of the effectiveness of cultivation. When his practice was effective, his energy improved, though he still needed to use medicine to treat his physiological condition. When his practice was ineffective, the same medicine was also no longer effective.

People nowadays are difficult to teach, but not impossible. The Venerable Master talked about using education to save the country, and the establishment of schools is especially important. We need to start with the next generation if we wish to help this country establish proper ethical and moral values. If we have a chance to communicate with our friends around us, we will find that many people have discovered this issue as well, though they might have different views on it.

Every Wednesday, the high school students outside of our monastery are dismissed from school shortly after 1p.m. Boys and girls mingle together, and their parents cannot do anything about it. I discussed how to deal with this societal problem with an American elder. He is a Theravadan Buddhist practitioner, and did not seem concerned at all. He said, "I am lucky that I am not a young person."

The manager of a small post office, also an American, knew that if his son were to carelessly get someone pregnant and father a baby, then he, as the grandfather, would be responsible for paying long-term child support after their relationship ended. He told his son, "If you are careless, your life will be ruined." There was also an old disciple of the Venerable Master who was very concerned about his son's relationship choices. He required that whoever his son chose needed to have a "clean family history". He even took the characters of the other person's parents into consideration.

Regardless of how you put it, it is very difficult for a single person to counteract societal trends by oneself. On the other hand, if you take a look at our schools, if students can truly accept an ethical education, and avoid making major mistakes, then they will surely be able to bring a positive wave of energy to the society as a whole in the future. With this

迫感。這非常重要。

2004年東南亞大海嘯，奪去了20萬人的生命。泰國佛教徒做了個視頻。題目——「陰間實況」：劫後陰間新聞。在油管都可以找到。油管上分成好幾個8分鐘的片段。對這些人往生後，投胎的因果情形介紹得很清楚。有的佛友稱之為現代版的《地藏經》。大家有興趣可以看看。這些人在沒有預知的情況往生，其實我們很多人的命運可能也都差不多。

前幾年有位女居士往生。上人在世時，她就來過聖城，後來全家搬到聖城附近，前前後後親近聖城15年以上。那段時間，我一有空就進聖城和法師一起做工。因為看見那位女居士和幾位道友一起去聖城的君康素餐館幫忙，我跟法師說，她們很發心護持道場。法師說，「她再不護持就來不及了。」當時我覺得法師好像說人家馬上就要死了，太不吉利。沒想到，真讓法師說中了。

那位女居士往生以後，沒多久，家裡的房客幾次感應到她回家了，嚇得夠嗆。可能是她還是放不下孩子和丈夫。後來參照其他方面的情况，可以知道她在中陰身徘徊了相當長的時間。現在想想，她本來有很多機會可以更精進的修行。作為道友，法師如果直接跟她講來日無多，從世間法來說，近乎粗魯無理。可從佛法來講，這才是慈悲。✽



kind of foundation, when we talk about seeking responses from the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, their accumulated merit and virtue would not be destroyed.

With the remaining time, I would like to discuss another topic: “mindfulness of impermanence.” If we can constantly be mindful of the impermanence of human life, we will bring forth a sense of urgency in our practice. This is very important.

The tsunami in 2004 in Southeast Asia took away the lives of 200,000 people. Disciples of the Thai Buddhist tradition made a video called “The Truth of the Underworld” revealing stories of after death experiences which followed for many people after this disaster. This video can be found on YouTube. On YouTube, it is divided into several 8-minute-long segments. The videos clearly show what happened to the people after they died and were reborn according to cause and effect. Some Buddhist friends call it a modern version of the *Earth Store Sutra*. You may take a look if you are interested. These people died unexpectedly. Many of us might face similar destinies.

Several years ago, a female lay practitioner passed away. She had been to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (CTTB) before the Venerable Master entered Nirvana. Her entire family ended up moving to live near CTTB, and had been involved with CTTB for more than fifteen years. During that time, whenever I was free, I would come to CTTB and work with a Dharma Master. I saw this lady help out at the Jyun Kang Restaurant with a few of her Dharma friends, and I expressed to this Dharma Master how they were so supportive of the monastery. This Dharma Master said, “If they don’t support the monastery now, they will run out of time.” I thought the Dharma Master was speaking nonsense at the time, as if they were going to die immediately—how inauspicious. To my surprise, he was right.

After this lady died, the tenants in her home felt her presence return on several occasions, and this scared them very much. She could not let go of her husband and children. Taking other factors into consideration, we can see that she stayed in the intermediate state between death and rebirth for a very long time. Now that I think of it, she had many chances to cultivate more diligently. As a Dharma friend, this Dharma Master could have told her directly that she did not have much time left. In secular terms, that would have been rude and unreasonable. However, from a Buddhist point of view, that would have been truly compassionate. ✽