

## Leading a Meaningful Life

Written by Master Cheng Yen  
Friday, 15 January 2010 14:49

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In a lifetime, how many years are actually there for one to render service to humankind?

Oftentimes, people become listless and waste their lives away in a deluded life. They are no more awake than a sleeping person having a confused dream. While adequate sleep indeed helps us to replenish our physical strength after a hard day and to reestablish the balance of body and mind; however, that is its primary purpose, so we should not indulge in sleep.

In a lifetime, the time when one can spend doing real work is in fact very limited. In the 24-hour day, eight hours are spent on sleep and nearly two hours on the day's three meals. That adds up to a total of four months spent on sleeping and 720 hours on eating, out of the 12-month year.

If we further eliminate the periods when we could not really contribute to society, such as childhood, old age, and the learning period as a student, how many years are left for us to work for the good of humankind? Even the most diligent person can only contribute one-third of his lifetime to society. As time is so limited, if one moreover wastes it by idling about doing nothing meaningful, one's energies will be drained and one will not be able to live out the meaning of life as a human being.

Time allows a person to complete his studies, fulfill his career, and realize his aspirations. It is also time that enables one to achieve fulfillment on the spiritual path. To a wise person, time is like a precious diamond; but to an ignorant person, time is like a handful of dirt, with no value whatsoever. If one can utilize one's wisdom to treasure time and work diligently, there is in fact nothing that cannot be accomplished in this world. If one squanders one's time, in the careless way one would scatter a handful of dirt—living a daydreaming life and indulging in pleasure—eventually, one will accomplish nothing, essentially becoming a burden and parasite to society.

During the span of one day, time is mostly wasted on oversleeping. While sleeping, one cannot do anything and time just slips away. At the end of a day, nothing is accomplished from it.

In everyday life, if one does not mindfully distinguish good from bad nor diligently fulfill one's duty, how different is one from someone who is asleep?

Living aimlessly, oversleeping, and indulging in too much comfort and pleasure will eventually bring many afflictions and hindrances for oneself. When one is idle, one will inevitably pass the time meaninglessly by dwelling on one's feelings of misery. And if one only engages in the pursuit of temporary pleasure and enjoyment, one in fact ends up experiencing even greater suffering.

### Living in order to work

"To live in order to work" and "to work in order to live" are two phrases with the same words but

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vastly different meanings.

If a person makes full use of his abilities to work, so that he lives out the value and meaning of life, he is "living in order to work." However, "working in order to live" signifies the helplessness of a person who has no choice but to work, for he cannot otherwise meet the basic needs of life.

The most fulfilling thing in life is to contribute in whatever way one can to benefit humankind. One who is willing to be of service to others will be able to endure hard work willingly and without complaint because of his volunteer spirit. Because of such a spirit, he feels boundless happiness and joy no matter how busy he may be.

If one toils for personal gain, indeed such a life will be afflicted with worries over gain or loss, success or failure. Yet life is impermanent; catastrophes and good fortune can befall anytime. Some people may enjoy success all their lives, but fall into a very distressed state as they approach life's end. Some people may experience a lifetime of poverty and misfortune, and yet meet with success in their later years.

While a person can toil either for his own personal achievement or for the well-being of society, in comparison, the spiritual growth will be entirely different.

Having benefited from resources provided by society, we should give back to society. Therefore, we should all do our part by contributing to society with a spirit of service. The happiness gained from benefiting others is a happiness that is truly everlasting.

### **Time is fleeting**

The Sun does not stop revolving even momentarily, nor does the Earth. Time slips away with the rising and setting of the Sun, and the revolution of the Earth. Thus the Buddha tells us that everything is impermanent and changes are occurring even within a split-second. Therefore, we Buddhists must not have the misconception that "time is everlasting."

Samantabhadra Bodhisattva cautions us that "With each passing day, we draw closer to death; like fish losing water—what joy is there? Be as earnest and diligent in spiritual practice as we would putting out a burning fire in our hair. Remember that life is too impermanent for us to slacken."

What compassionate words of caution they are! Living in this world, we are heading toward old age and death with each passing moment. We are like the fish that cannot live without water but whose water, everyday, is gradually reducing. Just like this, our own lives are drawing closer to death with each passing day.

Time waits for no one. We should make good use of our youth to learn diligently and not yield to old age even when we are advanced in age. No matter how old we are, we should still keep learning. We should live and learn and give of ourselves. Even if we should fall ill, we must not waste life away by resting in bed and feeling depressed all day.

Most people, unaware that death is drawing nearer, still live an aimless and befuddled life. They

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do not know that the world is full of dangers and potential crises, which may shatter the current peace in a second's time. As such, what is the true meaning of happiness?

Human beings should race with time, seize each moment, and not allow our days to pass by fruitlessly. Merit and virtue is accumulated through time. Only if we persevere unwaveringly can we truly forge real strength.

The value and meaning of life do not lie in the length of one's life, but in how much effort one has exerted to serve others. As long as one faithfully fulfills one's proper duties as a human being, thereby gaining happiness and joy from one's work—that is the most fulfilling and most blessed life!

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&quot;;наконец выяснилось, что надписи сделаны не моей рукой, а подпись действительно &quot;  
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&quot;;моя, но в этом-то я и раньше признавался.

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&quot;бочек, он не &quot;

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&quot;улыбался; наоборот, лицо у него было хмурое и озабоченное.

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