



Guide to Tao Cultivation

**Lectures given by Heavenly Teacher
Buddha Ji-Gong**

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Foreword

This book is a transcript of a seminar given by our Enlightened Teacher Buddha Ji-Gong in October 1983 in Fong Shan city, Taiwan. This seminar was presented in the form of ten lectures and was intended for the 'most sincere and advanced cultivators.' During the seminar, Buddha Ji-Gong pointed out to the students the **direction** and **method of cultivation** in **accordance with the Tao** and how **to find the way back to Heaven**.

Today, this book is translated with the hope that it can help English readers to see more clearly the way of cultivation. Through the merciful guidance of Buddha Ji-Gong to the True Way, it is hoped that after receiving Tao, everyone can diligently make progress in his or her cultivation.

Since few books are available in English on Tao Cultivation it is hoped that this particular one will help to disseminate "The Good News" to every corner of the world.

With Buddha Ji-Gong's grace, may your wisdom be enhanced and enlightenment be within your easy grasp!

Lecture One

The Meaning of Life

A person's life always includes bitterness and happiness. Such emotions intermingle and manifest their presence throughout one's lifetime. Let us now discuss just how bitter or happy a person's life can be.

Bitterness - some of life's most bitter and painful encounters:

The greatest sadness in a person's life is to have a spiteful spouse and an un-filial child.

The most detested is to have someone repay one's kindness with injury.

The greatest misery is to be in an extremely distressed state.

The most disheartening thing is to be abandoned by one's friends and family.

The greatest frustration is to have success snatched from our grasp.

The most regrettable occurrence is to let our words or actions stray into the wrong.

The most exhausting thing is to be under tremendous mental pressure.

Now consider some of life's most tragic fates:

A person's fate can be destroyed by just one vice: all his accumulated virtues can be removed by merely being greedy. It is like a person who may be so involved in his pursuit of wealth that he forgets what is really important. Or, a bird in its earnest search for food is suddenly and unexpectedly seized by a predator.

To bully others or to act as if the law does not exist also causes one to face tragic fate. To be killed by unnatural means or to get caught up in natural and human made disasters, war, and ruthless destruction are also forms of life's most tragic fates.

Let's look at some of life's unavoidable painful circumstances:

- The pain of not having what we want.
- The pain of being separated from the ones we love.
- The pain of feeling bitterness toward others.
- The pain of illness and hunger.
- The pain of struggling for food, fame and profit or gains.
- The pain of having anxiety about family.

Are you familiar with these pains? These are the usual experiences of this human world.

Happiness

From the above examples, we may begin to sense the warmth and coldness between people. Since we are cultivating Tao we must act in the following way: **be content, even under a very difficult environment** and accept undesirable conditions. We must also **turn our knowledge into wisdom, remove confusion, learn the ways of the Buddhas, dissolve karma, and perform virtuous deeds**. From the midst of the ever-changing world; **seek for the unchanging truth**. From the 'false self (physical self) **seek for the 'true-self: reach toward the goal of self-enlightenment, the enlightenment of others, and for that which will benefit others as well as ourselves.**

Furthermore, we should be committed to the following: it seems that although the sentient beings of this world are many, we should still **vow to help them transcend the cycle of birth and death** so that the door of Heaven is made open for them; **vow to stop the endless suffering from worries and vexations; vow to cultivate**, though there may be no end to such a road; and vow to achieve what the Buddhas have attained, though the goal may seem great and distant.

We should have an awareness and **knowledge of the impermanent and phenomenal world** and yet, not be fussed about our material life; be **eager in our pursuit of Truth**; be willing to **sacrifice** in order to **serve others**; have a strict **discipline toward our own cultivation**, and view our fellow cultivators as equal to us. Hence we may reach for the perfection of our personality and become a virtuous character without faults or vices. In this way our lives will not pass by in vain.

When we cultivate, if we have the ability to help others we should do so eagerly. If we have wealth we should make donations and help people generously. If we understand Tao we should show others diligently. Furthermore, if we are endowed with high morals we should influence and reform others. **Happiness in the world is about doing virtuous deeds, helping others and establishing a contented mind.**

Mencius said, 'The one of perfect virtue has three sources of happiness: that one's parents and siblings are still living;; one feels righteous even before God; and one surrounds oneself with talented people and is able to educate them.' These are the delights that the virtuous person desires. Loyalty, the fulfillment of one's filial duties, the achievement of one's own mission in life and the making of worthwhile sacrifices: all these accomplishments bring us the deepest consolation.

Goals

From this moment onward, you must prevent evil from entering your mind, do not refuse Truth and make the devil your enemy, not the people.

Holy Teacher Living Buddha Ji-Gong wishes you to sincerely cultivate Tao, and genuinely work to contribute to the sacred cause of Tao propagation so that God's mercy and Holy Teacher Living Buddha Ji Gong efforts are not in vain.

Lecture Two

Differences between Saints and Human Beings

You have cultivated Tao for quite some time now, so do you know what is the difference is between mortals and saints? This lecture will allow you to have a better understanding of this subject.

The Differences between mortals and saints

- I. **Mortals do things for themselves, but saints do things for mortals.** Everyone sees and responds differently to the things that happen. Everyone is given an ability to make decisions about whether something should be done or not, and whether something is right or wrong. One can silently make evaluation or loudly demonstrate one's thoughts.
- II. Some people are greedy for the short-term gains, while some plan for long-term goals. For mortals, it is common that they are attracted to the things that will bring them benefits, and avoid the things which are not beneficial to them: just as rain is loved by farmers as it nourishes their crops, it can be hazardous for motorists and pedestrians if it makes the roads slippery. Or, if there is a full moon in the clear night sky, happy people would find it beautiful while it could be an annoyance for the night thieves. There are some who have power but are unwilling to pass it on to others. This shows their selfishness which in effect, creates competition for power. There are also some who have abundance or gains but are only thinking about their enjoyment. This shows their material desire, leading to competition for gains. **If we practice empathy toward others at all times, all the undesirable outcomes will not occur and all anger will be dissolved.** If in all circumstances we could think about other people, then our motive for self profit will be dispelled, and our sympathy for others will grow.
- III. All ordinary human beings are surrounded by blessings, yet they are not aware of it and hence, feel discontented in their temporary condition. If one never experiences danger and has not encountered a tough environment, then one will not yet know the blessings of a peaceful life. If one never experiences freezing cold and starvation, then will not feel the blessings of being warm and sound. If one never

experiences sickness and pain, then one will not yet appreciate the blessings of being healthy. If a person never experiences extreme bitterness, and does not know what it is like to be homeless and wandering, then one will not yet realize the blessings of security and peace. **Being appreciative of the blessings one has will bring contentment. Being tolerant one will naturally bring peace and security to one's life.**

- IV. When a virtuous person is being confined to a tough environment he will not lose his virtues. And when he is successful he will not be far from Tao. You should see that fame and fortune are the source of worries. Hence, **to lead a tranquil life without desires is the source of a blessed life.**
- V. By renouncing fame and fortune, we can set ourselves free from the worldly ways. By removing the concept of life and death, we can become a saint. If our ambition is not obstructed by glory then we may be called a saint. **If we are resistant to the temptations of wealth and high status we may then be called a sage.**

Hence in cultivating Tao we should:

- avoid complaints
- broaden our mind
- renounce our physical nature and nurture our true nature
- practice equality
- remove greed
- maintain a contented mind
- abandon a violent mind
- nurture an easy-going nature
- remove stinginess
- initiate our generous heart
- renounce our evil ways
- expand our virtuous heart

These are the ways of saints, the features that distinguish them from mortals.

Goals

In our lives, **faith is our closest companion**; it is the greatest possession we have. With faith, we can endure the heaviest burden and be guided to the righteous and enlightening way. It allows us to confront the toughest of all difficulties. It also gives us the power to challenge and resist temptation and thus, strengthen our capability to triumph over long-term trials.

When confronting difficulty we should feel appreciative of it rather than complaining about the hardship, as it is an element of success. If there exists something which obstructs our progress, we should find ways to overcome it. It is hoped that you can **find the faith and perseverance to accomplish your great responsibility**.

Lecture Three

The Steps in Cultivating Tao

Do you realize what the difference is; before and after received Tao? You could all understand the following: before receiving, it is true to say that karma determines a person's life. After receiving Tao, however, it can be said that a person's determination dominates over a person's karma.

Karma determines a person's life

Before you cultivate Tao, you have been flowing along with and influenced by the changing trends of the physical world. Hence, your actions were within the sphere of good and evil and thus, you were trapped within the cycle of **karma**. Due to this therefore, it is considered that "karma conquers mankind." As a result of this, we were faced with living according to the **arrangement of karma**.

Now that we have received Tao and are cultivating **Tao**, we have **inherited the ability** to:

- recognise what is right and wrong;
- distinguish the difference between good and evil;
- see our errors and transgressions and then make commitment to prevent them from repeating;
- understand what is good for humanity and to practice it courageously;
- avoid sufferings and veer toward blessings; and
- abandon all evil habits

so that our **good nature can be recovered and revealed**. By practising these qualities we are directly influencing and changing the environment in which we live.

Furthermore, it allows us to reach the highest level of spiritual evolution. As a consequence, the natural results of these changes will allow us to conquer karma.

Everything that occurs around us has its cause and effect. So what are cause and effect? Cause is the sowing of seeds of blessing or of disaster. Effect is the harvest of that which we have sown. The harvest, either the rewards for good deeds, or retribution for bad deeds, can be divided into two kinds:

one is called **instant repayment** (salient atonement) referring to the immediate reward or punishment one receives sometime in this lifetime as a consequence to one's deeds performed;

the other kind of harvest is called **delayed repayment** (latent atonement) which refers to the rewards or punishment we will receive in future lifetimes.

Let's take the example of planting. (If we plant grains or peanuts, we can reap the harvest in a period of several months)

But if we plant peach or an apple seeds, these would take several years to reap a harvest. So it can be' said that what we really reap have been what we sow.

The causes determine the results, and it is just a matter of time that these will occur. If a person plants the seeds of evil during the early part of his or her life, what is likely to happen is that he or she will harvest the evil results in the future. Hence, bad causes produce bad results, and good causes produce good results. Such is the law of nature.

A person's determination dominates over a person's life

After we received Tao we could diligently, renounce, the ten evils deeds. These are:

- Killing
- Stealing from others
- Being obscene
- Boasting
- Gossiping or stirring up trouble between people
- Using abusive language
- Showing disrespect for holy beings and subjects
- Have greed
- Have anger
- Have rage and having evil thoughts

Obey the 5 don'ts. These are:

- Do not kill
- Do not steal
- Do not be lustful
- Do not boast and lie
- Do not drink alcohol or eat meat.

Furthermore, follow the 5 constant virtues. These are:

- Benevolence
- Righteousness
- Propriety
- Wisdom
- Faith / Sincerity

All of these qualities are our cultivating standards which will initiate changes to our lives: they enable us to prevent sufferings and to direct us toward blessings.

Most people however, do not realise the above truths. Instead, they are plagued by worries, vexations, anger, and idleness which will only result in illness and put in jail if crimes have been committed. By profiting ourselves at the expense of others, we will harvest the due result of such actions. We will also be bound to the karmic cycle of anger, greed, infatuation, and passion.

To be a saint is not a miraculous feat as one might think. A saint is only someone who practices mercy and virtue and guards closely against committing sins. Angels have special gifts from God. They have inherited God's divine power; naturally they appear happy and contented. A holy person is one who performs deeds that can bring salvation to others and to his or herself.

Being wealthy you could give donations as a kind of virtuous deed. Being poor you could act according to Tao and see this living condition as a precious opportunity for self-cultivation. Being wealthy and of high position is a result of the accumulation of good deeds. Being in possession of long life and being blessed are the outcome of the cultivation of virtues. Although wealth, high position, longevity and a blessed life are obtained by the performance of good deeds, they nevertheless benefit you only.

Hence, if we see others suffering in bitter conditions, we will naturally help them as if we were in the same situation. If we see others performing good deeds, we will support them in their achievement as if we were also doing them. Do you want to live a wealthy, high status, long and blessed life? If so, then study the following teaching that, Holy Teacher Living Buddha Ji Gong Living Buddha transmits:

Mencius said, "There are those who are blessed by God, and there those who celebrated by men. Those who are benevolent, virtuous,

loyal, faithful, and continuously devoted to good deeds are blessed by God. Those who are high ranking officials are people who are only celebrated by other men. In the ancient time, sages and saints concerned that their actions and conducts should firstly to be blessed by God, and only then celebrated by men. Nowadays, people who associated with good deeds are only seeking to gain high rank or social position rather than be blessed by God. When they gain high status, they are no longer seeking for the blessings from God. Thus, we can see that they have become very confused from such conduct."

The ways you can receive the blessings from God is to follow the requirements of Tao cultivation. Having received Tao you could make further efforts in your cultivation. This cultivation involves the seven types of work:

1. Purify the mouth i.e. to turn to vegetarianism, purify thoughts and refine speeches
2. Ferry or guide others to the way of Heaven / Pure Land
3. Become a preacher of Tao
4. Set up a Holy Altar
5. Be a Pioneer of Tao
6. Serve in the Holy Altar
7. To give the three kinds of contributions.

These seven types of works are the fastest and most effective way that leads to sainthood. By performing these we are also in fact accumulating holy merits and establishing virtues for ourselves.

Purifying the mouth

Let's first discuss about purifying the mouth. Some people would say that if we are kind hearted that is enough, why be a vegetarian? To be a vegetarian is not merely a matter of us having a kind heart. Instead we could be concerned by purifying the mouth enables us to transcend our karmic force, stay healthy, and accomplish Tao so that we can return to Heaven.

There is nothing in the world that is more unclean than eating meat. Moreover, it is cruel to kill sentient beings for food.

Having a purified mouth enables us to seek blessings. When we are devoted to this practice we are observing the rules of abstinence - abstaining from bad habits. Not killing also allows us to seek longevity.

To seek wisdom is to learn and to listen broadly. To seek peace is to reflect. We could be careful and realise that we are capable of eating vegetables as well as meat by using the same mouth and of hurting or helping people by the same hand. We could notice that carnivores are often very ferocious, while herbivores are gentle and placid.

Furthermore, being a vegetarian, you can help heal the bodily diseases and prevent physical illnesses. You can cure mental sicknesses. Around the world, vegetarianism is promoted. Nowadays vegetarianism is gaining popularity and no longer consider backward.

To ferry or guide people to the way of Heaven

To ferry or to guide others to the way of Heaven is holy work. It involves conduct that is associated with sages and saints, and compassion that only bodhisattvas can deliver. Therefore, one who helps to bring salvation to others in times of extreme difficulty is called the living bodhisattva. One who can transcend karma is a brave person. Every Tao cultivator could help guide others to Tao. In doing this, one is similar to a lifeguard saving others from drowning in the sea. Moreover, it is the work that leads one to accomplish the will of Tao. One must realise that to guide even just one person one will receive a certain amount of holy merits.

Become a preacher of Tao

To study Truth is the noblest wish of a human being. To disseminate Truth is the holiest of responsibilities that we can take on. A preacher is one who assists others in their understanding of Tao; he or she is mankind's protector; the pastor of the Good news; an oasis in the desert; the guiding light through the maze of life; and a cook giving nourishment to others' souls.

Being a preacher of Tao can perfect our personalities, enhance our good qualities and improve our eloquence. This commitment helps bringing salvation to mankind, assists others to perform virtuous deeds in their daily activities and it can change malicious words into kind speeches.

Set up a Holy Altar

A Holy Altar is the place where Heaven is introduced to humanity. It is a meeting place of the three worlds. These being the Heaven of Spirits, the mortal world, and the underworld- It is a place where one could work at dissolving one's karma and cultivating toward the goal of enlightenment. It is like a 'power station' where one's energy can be recharged and revitalised; a 'rescue mission' for the human souls; a 'great school' of virtues; a sanctuary to shelter from natural disasters and human calamities; a heavenly realm of true happiness; and a tranquil land where one can remove all misleading thoughts.

Be a Pioneer for Tao

To be one who spreads Tao is to be the missionary of God: he or she is like a farmer who sows the seeds of truth on the earth and turns a barren field into a bountiful one, or like a kind doctor who saves people in the remote part of the world. Such a virtuous person spread the word, the Good News to every corner of the earth. Of these seven types of Tao works, this work brings the greatest merits: it is a great, rare and most commendable holy work.

Serve in the Holy Altar

To serve in the Holy Altar is the most basic type of work of the seven kinds of works on Tao cultivation. We know that to give our service to others is the most glorious of deeds. 'To work for Tao therefore, is most worthwhile and virtuous. Thus, to serve in the Tao centre is a great way of seeking happiness.

To Give the Three kinds of Contribution

The three kinds of contribution are: monetary contributions which help to deliver the sacred cause of Tao propagation; contribution in sharing of Tao discussion with others and the contribution of services within the Tao environment to support & help others to learn about Tao and establish themselves firmly in Tao. These contributions help the Tao community to propagate Tao so that to guide others back to Heaven/Pure Land.

Goals

From now on, do not boast about yourself: this is the practice of benevolence. Do not deceive or conceal the Truth from yourself this is the establishing of wisdom. Do not find excuses for yourself: this is the action of courage.

If you have an ulcerated wound, cut it away so that new flesh could grow in its place. If you have bad habits, you could renounce them to allow good conduct to appear. By striving forward you can enter and go beyond an adversity. You will then learn and gain real abilities and skills. If you face a tough test, you will be able to bear greater responsibility. From today onwards these are your goals to achieve.

Lecture Four

Five Creeds of Cultivating According to Tao

It has been some time since you have received Tao. How deep then, is your understanding of Tao? Teacher I will now ask you a few questions.

1) Is your belief in the Way of Heaven very deep, or do you ever doubt it?

Tao is Truth. It is the never-changing law of nature. In the Book of Poems it says, "Eagles fly high in the sky, fish swim deep in the water." God is omnipotent in keeping the whole creation in order. Thus, eagles fly in the sky and fish swim in the water are the obvious and unchanging Truth.

When Truth manifests itself in the world, nothing else can outweigh its importance. When Truth is hidden, nothing can penetrate its sphere. For example, the orderly movement of the sun, moon, and stars in the sky is an unchanging truth. Could anything cause them to alter from their natural ways? Or, the very small things we see such as ants and grains sand or even the microscopic bacteria through a microscope are also examples of Truth that exist. Though small these beings might be, they are given boundless vitality and life.

On the more invisible manifestations of Truth, we see that mankind and other sentient beings have the ability to feel love and care for their families, just as a hen takes care of her chicks. This example also explains the unchanging law of nature.

Hence, your belief in The Way of Heaven should be deep and, never in doubts. God will test you through others, by disagreeable conditions and sufferings, by illnesses and difficulties as well as by fame and fortune.

The greatest test of faith for us is to be deserted by our family members. The greatest test of our belief in Tao is to be in constantly wandering when carrying out the Tao duties; to be living in poor conditions; to have an unstable family life; and to be involved in constant tiresome dealings. However difficult these tests might be, our wisdom will reveal itself through these struggles: just as benevolence is revealed in disaster and courage is revealed in danger or uncertainty.

We could realise that fortitude is the strength to face adversity; that happiness is the source of contentment. Thus, we could strengthen our own beliefs. If external forces shake our belief, this indicates that we are unable to control ourselves sufficiently. If words from the outside are able to disturb our mind, this shows we lack confidence. If the forces from the outside are unable to agitate us, it is because there are sufficient fundamental beliefs in our faith. If the power from outside cannot provoke us, then it is because our cultivation is strong and stable.

On the road of cultivation you will encounter the disturbance of the mind and other adversities, and sometimes it may produce a feeling of repulsion and aversion. You could fight down all of these trials with all your endurance and strength.

If we meet suppression from outside sources which may mislead us in abandoning Tao, we then should stubbornly resist these ideas with our full endurance. If we are in an extremely distressed or difficult state that could lead to frustration, then we should fight it with all our courage. If we are in an extremely exhausted state which produces thoughts that make us act heedlessly and irresponsibly, we then can overcome them with carefulness. By applying these actions we can accomplish our duties successfully and thus, complete our journey of Truth.

2) *Are you always forgiving and gracious to all sentient beings?*

Be forgiving and gracious to all sentient beings. If someone tries to hurt us, we respond with good deeds. If someone is angry at us, we respond with peace, and if someone is stubborn, we respond with patience. If someone is pretentious toward us, we accept their actions with sincerity. If someone says hurtful words to us, then we respond with a soft manner. If someone speaks sarcastic words to us, then we keep silent in return. If we meet people who try to deceive us, we try to move them with our sincerity. If we meet violent people, we treat them with a peaceful manner, thus dissolving their violent tendencies. If we treat all beings with righteousness, then the evil atmosphere will not exist.

3) *Do you speak and act righteously and uprightly?*

To speak and act with righteousness we could give up gossiping about others as these deeds creates evil consequences. We could give up angry words so that we can dispel disharmony in our relationship. We could give up evil words in order to have a righteous heart. We could give up unrestrained words so as to avoid disastrous consequences.

People will usually speak in an unrestrained manner when they are angry, and will speak outrageously when they are excited. Sometimes people will talk about others' bad conduct but this does not help them to perfect themselves. Furthermore, some people like to call attention to others' errors yet, this cannot assist them to become righteous.

Thus, a virtuous person would point out in general the wrong conduct that exists in the world, but would not offend or expose a particular person's bad conduct. To be virtuous, we could preach morality to people, and certainly avoid revealing others' bad conducts. We could guide others to act benevolently and virtuously; to stop conducting their lives according to gains and disadvantages. To be virtuous, we could keep the truth of God, not mortal desire. We could teach and alert others to do virtuous deeds, not just to create good relationships with them and amongst themselves. We could conduct ourselves according to conscience, not solely according to man-made rules.

A virtuous person's words can be the guide to cultivation; his or her conduct can be the standards for cultivation; and all of his or her deeds will make others enjoy following. He or she looks dignified from a distance, and nearby, one will not feel uncomfortable with such person. We could realise that all these are the cultivating qualities that a virtuous person could possess.

4) *Are you peaceful and non-argumentative with your cultivating companions?*

Usually, when there are many people in a group, conflicts of opinion will inevitably happen. Nevertheless, each person has his own unique qualities. If you meet a person who is talented but has a lot of pride, you could tolerate such pride. If you meet a person who is pure minded but also dull, then you could endure such dullness. If you meet a person who is upright but also bad tempered, then you could tolerate such bad temper.

If you meet a person who is polite but also impatient, then you could bear such impatience. If you encounter something embarrassing and difficult to deal with, you could face it with composure, calmness and righteousness so that you can resolve the undesirable disputes and disorder.

If there are two people accusing each other and they hold on to their stubbornness then it would be better for both, if one can be humble and admit to his faults. If there are two people who are stubbornly keeping their opinions and criticising each other's mistakes, it will be good if one praises the other. These actions will ensure benefit and warmth to all.

5) *Do you perform your work without complaint despite of its hardships? Do you devote your full energy to the task you are performing?*

A Tao cultivator should not neglect his/her roles, responsibilities or difficult undertakings and exerts his or her full effort in accomplishing important duties. At times of progress, you should think ways to fully exert your efforts. And at times of regressing in your cultivation, you could think of ways to rectify and compensate the errors and mistakes you have done

In cultivating Tao, we must concentrate on continuously improving and enhancing our virtues, not our social positions. To perform Tao, we should only attach importance to sincerity and not to our wealth. It is said that the rise and fall of a nation is the concern of every citizen. Similarly, the rise and fall of the affairs of Tao is every cultivator's responsibility. Moreover, all cultivators must unite in a joint effort to work on the great cause of Tao to achieve the goal of Tao propagation.

Goals

You could realise that sin comes from greed, and true greatness is only attained from your sacrifices. Progress in your cultivation is made from your courage to do what is righteous regardless of the consequences. In our lives, it is difficult for us to establish the following:

- Being without worries
- Being without the struggle for survival, and
- Being without suffering from the pains of conscience.

It is also difficult to establish the following:

- To have restraint
- To have regularity or formality
- To have orderliness

Make these your goals. If you can establish these strengths in you, then I, Holy Teacher Living Buddha Ji Gong promise you a very happy and healthy life.

Lecture Five

The Work of Tao Cultivation

You are now part of the Tao community; hence, you are called cultivators. Being cultivators, what is it that you are cultivating according to? If you, having cultivated for such a long time and yet do not realise even this, then you have cultivated aimlessly and your efforts are invain.

The purpose of Tao cultivation

Cultivation involves cultivating your body, mind, and soul. The ideal way to cultivate your body is to exercise caution in speech and conduct. The excellent way to cultivate your mind is to have fewer desires. The perfect way to cultivate your soul is to remove sins that you have accumulated.

To cultivate the body

Not realising and admitting one's mistakes and errors is one's greatest fault. It is a disgrace for not knowing what shame is. When people see other's faults and never see their own, they will not discover their own ignorance in any way. When they always talk about other's faults and not admit to theirs, they are departing from the Truth. The wise ones can tell us what appropriate or inappropriate actions are. The enlightened ones can see their own faults and mistakes clearly and thoroughly.

At times, a saint would make mistakes. The reason we know they have made mistakes is because they are courageous enough to admit to their mistakes and correct them. Mortals on the other hand, tend to believe their actions and words are always right, regardless. When these people are criticised, they would develop hatred toward those who criticised them. This, moreover, lead them to failure and so, their wisdom is increasingly overshadowed by their ignorance.

If one loses a sense of direction in life, or strays into the wrong and does not want to return to the correct path, then one will be more confused about the goals of one's life. If we constantly believe it is right to criticise others, we will only cause trouble and misfortune for ourselves. If we do this to everyone we meet in our life, then we will bring sufferings upon ourselves.

If we favour ourselves more than others, we will cause others to think ill of us. If we like to make slanderous remarks and are disloyal,

then we will always be confused and will not realise the Truth. If we neglect, or disrespect a respectable person, we would cause misfortune for ourselves. If we do not act according to the Truth, we will cause disorder to our own lives.

You should all realise that when you are talking, your words should not be harsh. When you are acting, your actions should be agreeable; not depart from the acceptable limits. If you talk too much, this will cause others to dislike you. If you speak with deceiving words, others will despise you. If you speak without thinking, you will bring insult upon yourself.

Therefore, you should maintain harmonious words and a peaceful manner while you are speaking. You should be experienced and cautious when you deal with business activities. You should talk gently and slowly while you are making a speech, this will ensure your natural ease and capability of adapting to the Truth.

When you are at ease and not rushing in your action, you will naturally establish dignity in your composure. Do not expect others to act according to your ideas, and do not blame others. You should conceal some of your good points: this can assist you to achieve a higher level of self-cultivation.

You should even help others conceal their shortcomings, as this will broaden your mind. If you can only remember other's good points then everybody will want to be your friend. However, if you only remember their shortcomings then your enemies will be many. So, in order to successfully cultivate the body, these are the basic principles to practise.

To cultivate our mind

The first task we should perform before we wish to properly govern our mind is to abandon our material desires. We should understand that we must refrain from having too many material desires, bliss, and being complacent. If we lose our mind in material desires then we will create chaos for ourselves. If our mind is attracted to materialism, then we will struggle for fame and wealth incessantly. The more our selfish desires broaden, the narrower our mind will become. The more we produce selfish desires the more difficult it will be for us to become enlightened.

It is important that our souls are pure but, this is difficult because the mind always disturbs it. It is necessary that our mind be tranquil

but, our desire for materialism always obstructs it. It is all too easy for our mind to give in to fantasies and to have greedy desires; this is called ignorance and annoyance. This will only cause our body to suffer bitterness and our mind to fill with worries. Furthermore our souls will be in a turbulent state; it will be obliged to wander in the cycle of life and death, and be continuously sunk in the sea of bitterness in this phenomenal world.

People usually struggle for fame and wealth, and even often risk their lives for these things. A superior person never acts in this way. If we do not dispute with others about gains and advantages, our annoyances and worries will disappear. We should remove all our material desires from our mind then it will naturally be at peace and remain clear. When this happens, our soul will become pure and hence it will cease to further produce six material desires that are created by our eyes, ears, nose, mouth, physical body and consciousness. Naturally, this will lead us to abandoning our greed, anger and evil thoughts.

There are three essentials in the cultivation of our mind: to see clearly that accumulating wealth is all in vain: to realise that affection, feelings, and material objects are just temporary just like rising smoke which vanishes quickly in the air; and to awake ourselves to the transitory nature of life and death.

To cultivate our soul

To cultivate our soul requires us to be remorseful. We need to perform meritorious deeds, and nurture our virtues in order to compensate for the sins and karma we have accumulated in this and previous lifetimes. Our merits and virtues are the only luggage we may bring back to Heaven/Pure Land; these are the essential elements for us to become saints, which are also 'gifts' that we present to God.

All saints have merits and virtues. They speak virtuous words to help people of the world. If a person wants to have merits and virtues like saints, he or she should do good deeds in the society; establish merits by involving in holy duties in the Tao Centre; and to make an effort to bring salvation to sentient beings. It is true that a person's benevolent deeds easily influence others, and a person's righteous deeds easily move others. As such, a virtuous person shall courageously perform the virtue of benevolence according to righteousness.

Goals

When we fail in our endeavour, we should not complain nor regret, nor be frustrated. We should be courageous to strive forward again. When we succeed in our accomplishments, we should be humble, be willing to make concessions and be yielding at the proper time. For such actions will earn us respect and trust.

Lecture Six

Xin* - Mind, Idea, Heart and Soul

**Xin* (pronounced as seen)

There is a saying: "The body is the vessel in which we place our xin. Our xin is the master of the body. Do you want to master this xin?"

On Xin

Our soul should be of utmost purity. Our mind should be tranquil. Neither should the soul nor mind be disturbed or affected by any external influences or worries. When the soul is pure, Truth will remain inside of it. We should be firmly righteous in our attitudes and actions thus restricting material enticements to intrude which consequently obstruct our mind.

To reach the level of saints we should not let our mind waver and our anger rise. If our mind is full of ideas, we only increase our worries. If our mind is occupied by doubts then naturally we create more internal disturbances. When our mind is flooded with thoughts, all kinds of desires will consequently arise. When our goals of life waver, our plans for achievement will fail.

You should all regularly ***guan xin*** (which in Chinese figuratively means to be concerned). Literally it also means to close one's ***xin*** (mind). In other words, to 'close ***xin***', means to be concerned enough about your true self i.e. to close off your mind to all evil ideas and thoughts and never again let them appear.

Following is a list of evil thoughts and ideas you should guard against and close off from your mind:

- greedy thoughts
- unrestrained thoughts
- angry thoughts
- obstinate thoughts
- evil thoughts
- biased thoughts
- proud thoughts and
- suspicious thoughts

You can also be **kai xin** (which figuratively means happy and literally to maintain an open mind). To open **xin** means to open up your mind to Truth and righteousness and to allow only righteous ideas and thoughts to take root and be revealed. With no evilness but only goodness in our **xin** then we will be happy. Following are the righteous thoughts and ideas you should foster by opening your mind:

- good heart
- sincere heart
- righteous heart
- true heart
- pure heart
- humble heart
- respectful heart
- faithful or confident heart

One reason **saints** wish to **receive Tao** is to **find their true selves**. The reason that **sentient beings** want to **receive Tao** is to **receive God's blessings**. If we cannot recognise our original mind then we cannot be enlightened. Likewise, if we are not conscious of our original nature we cannot enlighten our soul. Not recognising our original mind means that our knowledge of Tao has been achieved in vain. Similarly, if we **cannot enlighten our soul then we do not gain anything from all the cultivation methods we have learnt..**

Thoughts can be categorised as good and bad; enlightened or confused; truthful or desirous. **Saints** are only **associating** with **righteous thoughts and abandoning evil ones**.

Everyone should know that the soul is the True self and that everyone has 'two façades'. One face is the physical body that represents the false self, it produces feelings and consciousness. The other is the true self. It has the real existence and is always enlightened, brilliant and full of absolute goodness.

Most sentient beings are greedy. They are forever trapped in the cycle of life and death. They also have unsettled minds that are full of vexation or annoyances: they like to cling stubbornly to erroneous thoughts. Consequently, all these attachments become heavy burdens for their lives.

As Tao cultivators we should take on all kinds of responsibilities. We see what kind of Tao work we can do and what our capabilities are so that it helps us in our cultivation and thus attain Tao. We know that we must have the **ability to see through the impermanent world**; and we should always **keep our mind open so that positive thoughts and ideas are revealed**.

If we are willing to part with our wealth, business and emotions for example, then we can be freed from the burdens of life. We see that a loving couple will not like to be separated. Likewise, if individuals have bad temper or have some flaws in their conduct they would not wish to correct them. **Human beings are forever reluctant to part from their habits, wealth, fame and accomplishment for they think they own them**. There is a saying: "If a person is without any kind of burden, then he must be very relaxed and free."

Sakyamuni Buddha said: "**Give up all the desires and ideas in you then your mind will be peaceful and you will be awoken and enlightened**." We know that if our mind is at peace, all our restrained thoughts or conduct will cease and at that moment we will be enlightened by that very effort. Hence, **enlightenment can be obtained the moment one gives up and ceases to have thoughts and ideas in one's mind**. This condition is also called, in Confucianism, "Heaven is in the Mind." There is another saying: "A person's mind should be perfectly peaceful, only so one can reach the level called perfect goodness." Our mind should be tranquil and freed from delusions.

To cultivate ourselves means to follow the doctrines and practise the teachings. In this way, we will be able to suppress and extinguish the desires and ideas in our minds. We will be able to enlighten our minds if we are able to be awakened to Truth. If we are able to have a tranquil mind we should always be able to act according to Truth. If we want to cultivate ourselves we must first of all banish all selfish desires from our minds.

If we can refrain from indulging in alcohol and carnal pleasure then we will have the ability to purify our minds. Consequently, as cultivator we could reach the following two levels of cultivation: contentment (which brings composure) and spontaneity. These qualities produce a personality of high moral state. Most people think they cannot live without public esteem and materialistic needs. A Tao cultivator will prove them as being short-sighted.

Goals

When we are awakened to Truth we will realise the real meaning of life.

When we realise the Truth of righteousness and non-ethical we can see.

What right and wrong is and what gains and losses are from our past actions. When we act without understanding then we are being foolish.

When we do something that we know we should not have done then we are at fault and negligent.

Lecture Seven

The Ideas of the Mind

The following questions concern you very much. You should answer them courageously. How do you feel about the ideas and thoughts you are having in your minds? Are they just a few or many? Are they agitated or peaceful; good or bad; happy or angry? The ideas and thoughts in our mind can determine our happiness or sufferings. They can bring blessings or disaster and can make us become a saint or a devil.

Evil thoughts in our mind

Chaos of the mind occurs when we rush in our speech and action; when we make ourselves angry, impatient and worried.

When we procrastinate in our affairs or in work; when we make our body unhealthy and our mind idle we are causing negligence to the mind.

Ignorance of the mind occurs when we do not know what is right or wrong and that we never recognise what is true or false and thus, we believe recklessly.

Demerits of the mind occur when we want whatever we see and pursue things that appear advantageous to us and when we are easily swung by changing conditions and when we are quick to shirk off responsibilities.

The evils of the mind exist when we allow our good thoughts to turn into bad ones and let them linger; and we let ourselves believe in evil opinions and follow them thus behave recklessly.

When we see only the superficiality of things and never realise the real underlying meaning; when we like to speak and listen to gossip; when we see things with a narrow mind and have shallow understanding; when we do not know the correct moment to advance or retreat; and when we speak boastfully and do things without restraint. These actions are the insanity of the mind.

When we retain the advantages for ourselves while passing on the disadvantages to others; when we are initially industrious but later become inactive and idle in the end; when we seek comfortable living but have a chaotic mind; we are happy when we see what is likeable and upset at the things we do not like. This is called the confusion of the mind.

When our friendship and affection are not genuine; when we flatter another while having ulterior motives; when we are a wolf in sheep's clothing; and when we speak unreasonable Words and are cruel in our behaviour. These are the dangers of the mind.

The above minds belong to sufferings, demerits and evilness.

Good thoughts in our mind

An attentiveness of the mind occurs when we revere God's Holy Will as it is all venerable; when we respect a superior man we are looking up at his virtues; when we revere the teachings of the saints and are cautious about our intentions.

With thoughtful consideration of the mind we may naturally act in the following ways:

With regard to our sight we are anxious to see clearly;

With regard to our hearing we are anxious to hear distinctly;

With regard to our tolerance, we are anxious that it should be benign.

With our expression we are anxious that it should be respectful.

With our speech we are anxious it should be sincere.

When doing business we are anxious that we should be solemnly careful.

When in doubt we make inquiries.

When we are angry, we should consider the consequence our anger may result in. When we see there are gains to be obtained we should think of righteousness.

The righteousness of the mind comes about when we appreciate the grace of God and the hard work of Holy Teacher Living Buddha Ji-Gong, when we reveal our good intention and realise the meaning of Truth, and make full effort and use our wisdom.

The transformation of the mind appears when we realise that pursuing wealth and fame with all our effort to the very end of our life is all but futile, when we are awakened and thus make effort to change our goals of life and take on cultivation; when we reform our behaviors and actions to lead our lives wisely rather than seeking contentment in wealth as most others do and we do not use craftiness to gain advantages and cause losses to others.

The cultivation of the mind exists when we improve our inner morality and when we strengthen our belief in Tao and magnify our encouragement and commitment for further cultivation and perform the work of Tao.

The virtues of the mind occur when we:

1. perform holy merits:
2. volunteer to serve and help out in Tao activities
3. reciprocate the good deeds given by others and help others to the best of our abilities.

The above are the essential thoughts that enable us to gain holy merits and blessings: they serve as the most effective way to accomplish our cultivation goal and the return to Heaven/Pure Land.

Goals

From now on, you must perform the Tao work even when you encounter any obstacles. The teachings of saints encourage everyone accomplish virtuous deeds and exhorting to perform goodness. To realise the Truth and to perform according to the Truth is the ultimate goal of realising Truth.

Lecture Eight

Righteous Desires and Virtuous Deeds

There are two kinds of desires in the mind: righteousness desires and selfish desires. There are three levels of virtuous deeds: superior good deeds, medium virtuous deeds and minor virtuous deeds. A cultivator of Tao should recognise all of the different thoughts and actions. Following is a detailed discussion of this subject.

Righteous desires

To be a cultivator of Tao, we should get rid of all material desires, pacify and tranquil our mind, reform our bad conducts, follow the good thoughts and performs them accordingly. A person can be enlightened by performing all of these examples and thus become a saint, while others find difficulty in confronting these challenges and become constantly confused.

In reality, it can be said that a 'normal' person is the same as a saint. If our mind is confused, we are just 'normal' worldly people. However, when our minds are awakened and enlightened then we are saints. When our minds are attached to the material world then we feel annoyed and disappointed when we cannot achieve what we desired. However, the moment when we detach our thoughts from this material world, we feel like in heaven (in the mind).

We should get rid of the 'Three poisons'- greed, anger and ignorance from our mind through the following methods of cultivation:

- Discipline – get rid of bodily greed
- Serenity - calms the angry mind
- Wisdom - removes stubbornness, ignorance and reveals Truth.

A wise person can get rid of material or selfish desires, whereas, an unwise person always succumbs to material desires. Material desire is like a veil which covers a person's conscience and it is like a path leading to sufferings.

When desires appear, we tend to have a disturbed mind. These desires will create worries for us. However, our mind will be clear and tranquil when we are set free from such thoughts and thus we feel peaceful.

A saint is without desires and a sage has very few desires and let go specific wants but an ignorant person is totally overwhelmed by

desires. Accordingly, a person possessed the greatest strength if he can get rid of his selfish desires and can refrain from thoughts to outdo others.

The greatest sin is to desire all things. The greatest disaster is to be unsatisfied with what one had already obtained. The greatest demerit is to speak badly of others. Saints are always associated with good desires, whereas mortals attach themselves to material desires.

Desire itself is neither good nor bad. It is totally dependent on the intention and how it is carried out and initiated. For example, a person's hand can beat or hurt others. Or, it can be used for massaging a sore back. The desires of saints and sages are all good desires.

Confucius said: "The man of perfect virtues, who wishes to be accomplished in virtues, seeks also to help others attain virtues. Wishing to attain perfect cultivation for himself he seeks to assist others to reach for the same goal." He also said: "I wish to act according to benevolence and immediately benevolence appears in my conduct"

Mencius also said: "Allow your good desire to appear in your conduct."

Such are the good desires to possess.

The desires of the worldly people, however, are for prosperity, wealth, noble position, glory, fame and many others. These are all material desires.

Both normal person and saint have goals. The goal of the normal person is wealth and advantages. A saint only contends to perform good deeds to benefit the mortal beings. Such are the difference one sees between saint and the mortals.

Naturally, if a person likes to fight for power then his mind is the weakest. If he likes to contend for wealth, then his mind is the poorest. If he struggles for authority, then his mind is always troubled. When, on the contrary, if a person always contends to perform good deeds, then his mind is the happiest.

Virtuous deeds

To be a cultivator of Tao, we should cease committing all sins and perform only virtuous deeds.

Virtuous deeds are classified into these groups:

- to make our own mind righteous - this is the basis of all good deeds.
- to have a loyal and filial mind- these are necessary good deeds for everyone.
- to maintain sincere belief and virtues - this is because good actions are virtuous deeds by which we are to conduct ourselves in life; and to help and guide others to Tao cultivation.

Meritorious deeds too, are making monetary contribution to help others for a spiritual purpose.

We are truly wealthy when our lives are full of virtues. The real high position we obtain is when we do virtuous deeds and happily make donations. Such actions not only benefit others for they are in fact also advantageous to us. The more we do for others, the more we will benefit. The more we give to others, the more we will receive.

Goals

From now, you should cultivate your mind and keep your soul tranquil. You should commit to the followings:

- Tolerate the bitterness and hardship of your Tao works
- Endure insults and complaints
- Hold back anger and be patient
- Bear adversity, accept annoyances and slanders from others

The only way we can repay the grace of God is to devote ourselves in benefiting the worldly beings by guiding and helping them to cultivate themselves and gain enlightenment. The best way to repay Holy Teacher's mercy is to nurture and nourish the next generation of cultivators of the Great Heavenly Way - Tao.

Lecture Nine

The Inner Work of Cultivation and the External Work of Guiding and Helping Others to Cultivate Tao

Cultivation according to Tao involves the inner work of self cultivation which is the pacifying of the mind. It also includes the outer work of guiding and helping others to cultivate and to perform virtuous deeds.

The work of pacifying one's mind

When our mind is at peace, desires will disappear. When it is at peace, it is able to accommodate Truth. When our mind is pure, we can adapt ourselves to the changing tides of all things.

We know that we must have:

- Durable wisdom so as to be awakened to Tao
- Firm realisation of Tao so as to have successful self cultivation
- Strong belief in Tao so as to perform Tao duties
- Composed mind so as to keep Tao close to us
- Stable disposition so as to allow us to achieve Tao

As we know material desires are unfortunately the origins of sufferings: they can damage our bodies; they cage our mind and injure our original nature. Once these desires are extinguished, the Truth will prevail and live in our heart. Therefore, if we are able to purify and pacify our mind; the Truth will reappear and reveal Itself to us.

In purifying our mind it is necessary to establish the following:

- Cleanse our mind and thoughts
- Discard our temper and flaws
- Expel our anxiety and worries
- Have a clear and bright mind

In pacifying our mind we need to work on the following:

- Discard all thoughts
- Not become enraged
- Cease the confusion in the mind
- Avoid others' slanderous talks
- Not let the burden of family disturbs our mind
- Abandon anger, jealousy and greed in our mind

The work of mastering our mind is to pacify it. The way of guiding others is to work with sincerity. The work of taking charge of business is to specialise in the rules. The work, of controlling our bodies is to cultivate ourselves diligently. If we realise these rationale and put into practice then we will naturally pacify our mind.

The way to perform virtuous deeds

The greatest happiness for a person is to enjoy doing virtuous deeds. The most auspicious thing for a person is to be content with what he or she has. If a family accumulates virtuous deeds, then more blessings will descend onto it. However, if a family accumulates sins and vices then sufferings will befall onto it. If we do very few virtuous deeds or have few vices then we will get what we deserve almost immediately. If we do a great deal of virtuous deeds or have many vices, then we will get our reward or punishment later on in the future. If we do virtuous deeds then we will be surrounded by blessings and sufferings will not be near.

Lao Zi said: "A good man always says good words; sees things with a good point of view; does virtuous deeds; and since he has performed these three virtues God will certainly bless him in three years time. An inferior man always says bad words; sees things with a bad perspective; and does bad deeds. Since he has these three things then it is natural for him to receive retribution in three years time."

A superior man therefore will naturally be blessed with respect, wealth and happiness and accomplishment. Evilness will not exist for such a person. So think for a while whether you want to be a good and virtuous person. If you want to be good and virtuous then you should accumulate good deeds and virtues; be filial to your parents; be friendly and kind to your friends; make yourself righteous and guide others to cultivate Tao; show sympathy and help others when they meet misfortunes; and be happy for others when they accomplish good deeds.

As you all know saints perform these things; rescuing others from danger, having the courage to do what is right regardless of the consequences, being merciful, compassionate, happy and willing to part with material possessions.

We need to be merciful so we can bring happiness to all beings. We should be compassionate so we can dispel all kinds of bitterness from the sentient beings. We should be happy so we can create good

affinity with others. We should be willing to part with phenomenal things so we will not get absorbed in the concept of ego, with other sentient beings. Thus, allowing us to make contribution, particularly donation and save all sentient beings without prejudice.

When we are merciful, compassionate, happy and willing to part with phenomenal things then we are practicing the 'Three contributions': Monetary contribution to help the sacred cause of Tao propagation, thus bringing happiness to all sentient beings through the realisation of Truth; contribution in the sharing of Truth to help others to understand Truth and hence, recover their wisdom; contribution in services within the Tao environment helps build confidence in others for their further cultivation and thus, alleviate them from distress and misery.

Advantages of monetary contribution:

- It can dissolve the hatred associated with others from the past (and the previous lives)
- As this action dissolves greed, it enables a person to perform virtuous deeds with ease
- It benefits the world
- It brings many blessings

A hospital is like an execution ground for people who have committed sins - it is the manifestation of hell on earth. On the contrary, a Tao Centre is a sanctuary for cultivation: it is a place where people wish to dissolve their sins. It is therefore the manifestation of Heaven on earth.

Sakyamuni Buddha said there are three groups of worldly things:

1. The first comprised of things which can be taken away from a person, a person cannot take with him after death, i.e. jewellery, money and wealth.
2. The second are qualities which no one can take away from a person yet this person cannot take with him after death, i.e. intelligence and talents.
3. The third attributes consist of which no one can take away from a person but this person can take with him even after his death: these are the accumulation of blessings.

When we have wealth but do not use it to help others then we possess wealth in vain. As a result, it can further rotten us. Therefore an ignorant person with an abundance of wealth will only create more sins. It is blessing for a person to be wealthy and at the same time generous. It is noble if a person is poor but generous. It is benevolent if a person is frugal but generous.

Filial piety is the most important of all virtuous deeds. We may accumulate wealth for our later generations, however, they would not necessarily benefit from it. Our later generations on the other hand will receive the lasting blessings through our accumulation of virtuous deeds.

Goals

- Modesty is the quality that establishes our personality. To anchor ourselves happily in Tao is the basis of enjoying peace and stability both physically and spiritually.

Lecture Ten

The cultivation of good karma and soul

You have all cultivated for a long time now. Do you know what the advantages of cultivating according to Tao are; and why you should cultivate according to Tao?

The purpose for us cultivating according to Tao is to enhance our wisdom, to strengthen our virtues, to transcend worldliness, and to attain holiness. Thus, it is necessary to cultivate both good karma and soul.

Karma

Karma and soul have their different characteristics. First, we will talk about karma. When we are born into this world, inevitably karma arranges our lives. Karma is the consequence of our past deeds. It is also the condition for us to perform and thus re-establish ourselves with of the five virtues: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faith. Our past deeds produce good or bad fortune; blessings or sufferings; wealth or poverty, nobility or immorality, longevity or short life, and fame or obscurities. If we practise the five virtues then karma will produce for us good fortune, wealth, nobility, longevity and fame. If we act contrary to the five virtues, then karma will produce for us bad fortune, poverty, immorality, short-life and obscurity.

There are two kinds of karma: first, there is the invisible karma. Its sources are less obvious and therefore we cannot see them. Nevertheless, invisible karma, such as sufferings or illness, always exists. Someone might ask what we have done in our previous life that makes us suffer so miserably in this lifetime. Such a question shows the karmic reaction of how a person's past life influences the present life. If we want to know what we have done in the previous lives, we can find the answer in the conditions of things that karma deliver to us in this birth. If we want to know about our future, we can find the answer in the action and deeds performed right now.

Secondly, karma can also be of the visible kind. For example: two people might have a verbal conflict that leads to physical violence, and at times, even death. Or they might have disagreement in opinions and fight with each other. In another instance: a person will be imprisoned for committing crimes. Or a person is shown appreciation for his or her good deeds. These examples show the

immediate repayments for the deeds done. The sources of such karma are very clear; we can see them easily.

To be a cultivator of Tao, we could know about karma and to set our karmic goals and accomplish them. If we wish for an ideal life, we firstly must cultivate ourselves since everyone has a different karma and so it is pointless to envy others. When we encounter difficulties we could cope with them with a peaceful mind.

If we still have hatred we will ignorantly complain against heaven and other people with our misfortunes. After we understand karma, we will endure misfortunes with courage and bravery. Since we know about karma, we could now proceed to set goals.

The meaning of setting up goals for our karma is what Mencius had said: "There is no distinction between longevity and short life. A person could cultivate himself regardless whether he will live a long or short life. This is referring to setting up one's goals for one's karma. **Thus, if God bestows fewer blessings on me I could face this condition by strengthen my virtues. If God makes my body exhausted I could release my mind to balance this condition. If God sends down misfortune on me I could pacify my life to get through this condition. If God sets me in a bitter or tough environment I could make my thoughts happy in order to cope with this condition.**"

God decides for us our good fortune, sufferings or blessings according to our deeds. Mortals decide for themselves whether to take a path leading to fame or not. Everyone can decide to establish his or her goals of karma and perform according to Tao. However, ones who wish to establish goals for their karma must remove their bad karma so as to create good karma and thereby accomplish their goals.

Soul

There is a saying: "To accomplish one's goals for one's karma one could cultivate one's soul." The work of cultivation of our soul is to accomplish our goal for our karma. In order to accomplish our goals we must cultivate both our virtue and wisdom. There is a folk saying which says: "Although God can decide about human blessings and longevity, we could still do good deeds whether or not our good works are known by others. Though karma can decide human prosperity, we can still obtain blessings through our own work and effort."

Our virtues allow us to return Heaven. Our virtuous deeds enable us to change our predestined life. However, our displayed good deeds (known as the Yang deeds) will only earn us fame. Un-publicised deeds (known as the Yin deeds) will be reflected in the blessings God gives us.

Our wisdom allows us to realise our own mission in life- it is to awaken ourselves from the phenomenal world. Buddha emphasised the Real Self and Real Enlightenment. This is referring to that if we enlighten ourselves we will be free from the entanglement of karma. However, if we are still confused about our goals for our karma, then our lives will be arranged by karma.

When our lives are immersed with blessings we will produce righteous karma, which is good karma and thus leads us to righteous karma; righteous words in our speech, righteous progress in our goodness and hence eliminate evilness in our lives. If we possess great level of wisdom, we will judge righteously, we will have righteous composure; we will have righteous thoughts in our mind and righteous evaluation about life.

When we have a righteous mind, we will become enlightened. When we are lenient, we will become a bodhisattva. On the contrary, if we have an evil mind, naturally, we will become wicked and immoral. Sin is like a greedy devil. Thus, to be a bodhisattva we must cultivate both virtues and wisdom. A cultivator will turn away from the course of calamity and turn toward the way of goodness. These are the benefits of Tao cultivation.

Goals

To pursue a matter with determination is an important element for accomplishment. To be freed of desires is the basis for becoming saints. Our wills could flow eternally - even the highest mountain or the boundless sea cannot restrain our commitment. Our wills could be able to penetrate everything - there is no army which can defend against it. From now on, you could keep faith in Tao and accomplish the great duty. Strengthen your will, and complete your great vows.

The Teachings of Ji Gong - the Living Buddha

- By **purifying one's mouth** (speech and diet) one can cease the occurrence of one's karma created from the previous lifetimes. This enables one to become a “**Free Buddha**”.
- To **ferry or guide others** to the way of Heaven helps alleviate the sentient beings from the sea of suffering and so enables one to become a “**Compassionate Buddha**”.
- To become a **preacher** of the Great Tao helps others to cease doubting the character of Tao and to build faith in Tao, enables one to become a “**Wise Buddha**”.
- **Setting up a Holy Altar** allows one to form good affinity with other sentient beings and enables one to become an “**Auspicious Buddha**”.
- To **pioneer Tao** to new places enables one to become a “**Buddha of Meritorious Virtues**”.
- **Serving the people in the Tao environment** allows one to practise humility and modesty and to share the love of God with others. It is a place for one to exert one's full effort in performing Tao duties. This allows one to become a “**Vivacious Buddha**”.