A BUDDHIST GOAL THAT CAN BE ACHIEVED IN ONE'S PRESENT LIFE

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Dharma Master Yin Kuang said: All Buddhist sutras and Buddhist publications are intended for people to avoid misfortune and secure their well-being, and to correct their misbehaviors and do good things for society. They teach us the causes and effects in the previous life, present life, and future life. They show us how to recognize our own inherent Buddha nature. They point out the sufferings of the unending birth-death cycles of all living things. They show us how we can get out of the birth-death cycles and be born through a lotus flower in the World of Ultimate Bliss. We should be thankful and consider ourselves extremely fortunate to know Buddhism. Whenever you worship Buddha, be sure your hands and your surroundings are clean, and be respectful and sincere as if Buddha were present. In this way, you will deserve unmeasurable benefits. If one abuses Buddha Buddhism, that sin is indescribable, and one will pay for it in time.

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1 Be aware of the present circumstances and future path.

1.1 Life is difficult most of the time.

Who can avoid sickness, aging and weakness, separation from and death of your loved ones, loss of wealth, and the hate and harm of your enemy? The poor wants to become rich, the childless wants to have children, the unemployed wants to have a job, etc. How many of these wishes can come ture? Is there any way to solve these unhappy problems?

1.2 This life is full of calamities.

Many people die in hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and fires. Many others starve due to drought or too much rain. Unexpected death is facing us every year. In a nuclear or biological war, the human race could be eliminated. Is there any way to avoid these disasters?

1.3 The revolving wheel of Birth-and-Death is painful.

One's death is not the end. A living body can die, but its consciousness never dies. Upon the death of a body, the consciousness leaves the body and goes to one of the six paths: Heaven, the human world, the ashura world, the animal world, the hungry ghost world, or hell. Heaven and the human world are the better places of these six,

but the birth-death cycle is unavoidable. Everybody has to go through the birth-death cycle on one of the six paths. Imagine how terrible it is in the animal world and how painful it is in hell. The birth-death cycle among the six paths is known as the "six-path revolving wheel of Birth-and-Death". Is there any way one can escape this revolving wheel of Birth-and-Death and secure a peaceful, happy eternal life?

- 2 How to solve the problems of a difficult and calamitous life and escape the revolving wheel of Birth-and-Death.
- 2.1 Divert the difficult life, eliminate the calamities.

Whether we have a fortunate or unfortunate life is determined by our own mind and behaviors. This system is known as cause and effect. The causes and effects involve three time periods: the past, the present, and the future. A difficult life and disasters are the results of our previous evil thoughts and bad behavior. We can divert and avoid the unfortunate events by reciting Buddha's name. As stated in the Buddhist sutra: Serious offenses and crimes committed in aeons can be eliminated by sincerely reciting Buddha's name. Furthermore, the Buddhist Sutra says: There is an unlimited number of Buddhas in the universe to protect those who recite "Amitabha Buddha". Buddha posseses infinite virtue,

supreme wisdom, and boundless might. If you have Buddha's blessing, no disaster shall befall you.

2.2 Escape the revolving wheel of Birth-and-Death and gain eternal life.

Is there any other place besides the six paths? The answer is yes. The six paths are the worldly, common states. There are also holy places that are the states of Buddha.

There is a World of Ultimate Bliss which is west of and far away from our world: the kingdom of Amitabha Buddha. Everything there is made of gold and seven kinds of precious jewels. The environment is clean and stately. It is superior to any heavenly palace by a million-fold (There are many layers of heaven). Life in the World of Ultimate Bliss is eternal, in contrast to that on the six paths where birth and death are a continuous cycle.

According to the Buddhist sutra, if you are born in the World of Ultimate Bliss, your body is like gold and shines brightly. You are full of spiritual power. You get clothing and food when you simply think about them. Your life is eternal and you will become a Buddha after you complete your study under Amitabha Buddha.

How do you get to the World of Ultimate Bliss? According to Buddhist sutra, Amitabha Buddha will lead you there at the end of your life, provided that you recite "Amitabha Buddha" repeatedly and single-mindedly

until you have achieved perfect concentration.

2.3 An example.

The benefits stated in sections 2.1 and 2.2 are quoted from Buddhist sutras. We shall now describe 10 benefits gained by those who recite "Amitabha Buddha". They are:

- (1) The protection of all heavenly gods, day and night.
- (2) The protection of 25 great Boddhisattvas, including Kuan Yin.
- (3) The protection and blessings of all Buddhas. Amitabha Buddha shall shed light on you and protect you.
 - (4) No evil ghosts or poison snakes can harm you.
- (5) Flood, fire, weapons will not harm you. Accidents shall not happen to you.
- (6) Your past wrong doings, mischiefs and misbehaviors are all eliminated.
- (7) You will have no nightmares, only peaceful dreams, in which you may also see Amitabha Buddha's dignified golden image.
- (8) You will be happy, good looking, energetic, healthy, and successful.
 - (9) You will be respected by other people.
- (10) Near the end of your life, you will not be afraid and will be in your right mind. The Three Sages of the World of Ultimate Bliss shall have a golden platform for

you and lead you to their land. You shall be born there by transformation in a Lotus flower and enjoy utmost happiness and eternal life.

Notice that nine of the ten benefits are to change your present difficult life to a smooth and peaceful one, and the last benefit enables you to escape from the revolving wheel of Birth-and-Death.

3 Reciting Buddha's name

- 3.1 The simple morning-evening exercises. Recite:
- (1) "Namo our teacher Shakyamuni Buddha of great loving kindness and compassion." (For each recitation, bow, or hold your palms together in front of your chest).
- (2) "Namo Amitabha Buddha of great loving-kindness and compassion." (Bow, or hold palms together as in 1, above.).
- (3) "Namo Amitabha Buddha." (No need to bow, but be respectful and sincere. You can either kneel, sit or stand. Recite this at least 100 times, but the more the better. You may increase the number of recitations each day, and should not decrease them.)
- (4) "Namo Kuan Shih Yin Bodhisattva." (recite and bow once).
- (5) "Namo Ta Shih Chih Bodhisattva." (Recite and bow once. Kuan Yin and Ta Shih Chih are assistants to Amitabha Buddha; the three are known as the Three

Sages of the World of Ultimate Bliss. They are our teachers and friends, and therefore we bow to them to show our respect.)

- (6) "Namo the Great Pure Sea of Bodhisattvas." (Recite and bow once. There are many Boddhisattvas in the World of Ultimate Bliss. They are all our future teachers and friends).
- (7) "I vow to adorn the Buddha's pure land with this merit. Repay the four gracious kindnesses and aid those in the three paths of suffering below. May those who see and hear my vow all bring forth the Bodhi mind. And when this life is finished, be born together with other devotees, in the World of Ultimate Bliss. (This declaration is to direct the merits of reciting the Buddha's name to glorify Buddha's pure land, to help those named in this paragraph, and to affirm our determination to be born in the World of Ultimate Bliss.)
 - (8) Bow.

The above exercise should be performed twice every day, morning and evening. You should clean your hands and rinse your mouth before doing it. You may omit the bowing if there is no portrait of Buddha to bow to. It is all right to omit the burning of incense if it is inconvenient. You should face west and be sincere.

3.2 Ten-breath reciting.

Recite "Namo Amitabha Buddha" 3 to 5 or more

times within one breath. Repeat with ten breaths and finish with the declaration of directing merits, item (7) of 3.1 above.

3.1 is designed for very busy people and 3.2 is designed for extremely busy people. 3.2 only takes five minutes to perform. The most important thing is to do it in the morning and the evening every day. Face a portrait of Buddha if you have one, and face west as you recite.

If time permits, you should recite the Amitabha Sutra once, Rebirth Mantra thrice, and verses in praise of Buddha once, in between (2) and (3) of 3.1 This is the simplest and the most practical method that will assure your success in this life.

- 4 Ingredients for success in reciting Buddha's name.
 - 4.1 Simple standards of good and evil.

Reciting Buddha's name is the main ingredient and good behaviors are the supplemental ingredients. Both are necessary to assure full benefits and success in practicing Buddhism. They are just like two wings which are essential for a bird to fly.

Many people can not distinguish good from evil behaviors. The following table lists ten bad behaviors, as quoted from the Sutra on the Ten Paths of Good Karma. Your behaviors are good if you do not practice any one of the ten. On the other hand, your behaviors are bad if you practice any one of them.

Three physical evils: Killing, stealing, and committing adultery.

Four Oral evils: Lying, erotic language, ill talk, and two-tongued talk.

Three mental evils: Greed, anger, and delusion.

If one injures an animal, big or small, it is the same as killing.

If one acquires property or fame through dishonest or illegal means such as stealing, robbery, cheating, or coercion, it is the same as stealing.

Any sexual activity between people who are not husband and wife is adultery.

Any talk that is less than true is lying.

Any oral or written language that advocates excessive and abnormal sexual behavior is considered erotic language.

Impolite, scornful and hostile language is ill talk.

Using language to divide other people's friendship and mutual trust is two-tongued talk.

Excessive and ceaseless desire for property and wealth, with a failure to give to good causes, is greed.

To fly into a rage whenever something is not acquired as desired is anger.

Lack of wisdom, unreasonableness, opinionated, and

refuse to believe the Buddha's teachings on causality is delusion.

4.2 Three conditions for being born in the World of Ultimate Bliss: Belief, determination, and practice.

Reciting Buddha's name so as to be born in the World of Ultimate Bliss is a special method besides the 84,000 ways of practicing Buddhism. It is called "the great path outside of all paths". Although the method is very simple, the principle is beyond our comprehension and only a Buddha knows. However, one does not need to understand the principle to practice it and to reap full benefit. Bear in mind that Buddha's moral standard is the highest and his words are always true, and therefore we must believe that whatever the Buddhist sutra describes is true.

To succeed, we must first believe that there is the World of Ultimate Bliss and we can be born there if we recite Buddha's name. Second, we must realize that this is the evil world of the five turbidities, and therefore we must make a firm determination to go eagerly to the World of Ultimate Bliss. Third, we must practice reciting Buddha's name every day.

- 5 Follow successful examples and study the Buddhist Sutra.
 - 5.1 Several Successful examples.

Because of his great kindness and compassion, Shakyamuni Buddha taught us the method of reciting Buddha's name so that we may be born into the World of Ultimate Bliss. This is the simplest, surest way of getting off the revolving wheel of Birth-and-Death and gaining eternal life. All other paths are far more difficult. Many great scholars have studied this path and found out that the more they study it, the more they appreciate it and they are convinced that this is the path suitable for everybody.

It takes a very high level of wisdom and mental capacity to appreciate this path. However, anybody can practice it and benefit fully. Because it is very simple and can be practiced by everyone regardless of educational background, it has been denigrated by some so-called smart people who say this path is only for poorly educated old women. They are wrong.

In the Flower-Adornment Assembly, both Wen Shu and P'u Hsien, the two sages who are the assistants to Shakyamuni Buddha, advised people to practice this path. The two great Bodhisattvas of India, Ma Ming and Lung Shu, advocated this path as the path for everybody. In China, great Dharma masters of their times, from Hui Yuan to Yin Kuang, all started to pratice other paths but finally switched to this path. Great master T'an Luan, whose mummified remains are still in preservation, and is known as the flesh-relic Bodhisattva, and great master

Chih Che, who upheld the heritage of the Buddha, both advocated this path. In modern times, the great master Ti Hsien of the Heavenly Platform (T'ien T'ai) school, great master T'ai Hsu of the Consciousness-Only School, great master Hung I of the Vinaya School, and master Hsu Yun and Yuan Ying of the Chan School all advised their followers to practice this path. Lay Buddhists, such as Liu Lei of Lu Shan in Chin Dynasty, the Pai Le T'ien of the Tang dynasty, Su Tung P'o and Wen Yen Po of the Sung Dynasty, Yuan Hung Tao of the Ming Dynasty, and P'eng Ch'ih Mu and Yang Jen Shan of the Ch'ing Dynasty, were all top scholars and all practiced the path of Pure-Land, i. e., they all aspire to be born in the World of Ultimate Bliss through reciting Buddha's name. There are countless numbers of persons practicing this path. Let us ask ourselves, is our wisdom superior to that of those great Bodhisattvas, great Dharma masters, and top scholars? If all thses wise people practiced the path of Pure-Land, is it correct for us to despise this path?

5.2 Study the Buddhist Sutras.

The path of Pure-Land is mentioned in almost all Buddhist Sutras. However three sutras specifically discuss it: The "Amitabha Sutra," the "Limitless Life Sutra," and the "Contemplating Limitless Life Sutra." One should at least read the "Amitabha Sutra" many times. If time permits, one should carefully read the "Ten

Essentials of Prue-Land Doctrine" 2 to 3 times. One shall then have a general understanding of the path of Pure-Land.

If you are a beginner or cannot read and study these references, you should read the following simply-worded pamphlets: "Out of Wrong Paths to the Correct Path," "An Introduction to the Path of Pure-Land for Beginners." "An Introduction to Buddhism." Or you may read the pamphlets "Three Ingredients in the Path of Pure-Land." and "Lung Shu's Script on The Path of Pure-Land." By reading a couple of these pamphlets, you shall get an essential understanding of the Path of Pure-Land. "Essays of Dharma Master Yin Kung," which is devoted to the Path of Pure-Land, and "Complete Works of An Shih." which includes some interesting stories, are two very good books to help people improve their wisdom and cultivate the right attitudes. These reading materials shall help you greatly in understanding Buddhist sutras.

6 Two common erroneous ideas.

6.1 The erroneous idea of "Decent thought and good behaviors are as good as reciting Buddha's name"

Everybody has the evil mind sets of greed, anger, and delusion. Furthermore, many people often commit the physical evils of killing, stealing and adultery. Therefore,

you cannot say you have decent thought and good behaviors at all times. Even if you do have decent thoughts and good behavior, you only cultivate your future fortune and well-being and therefore you shall be born into heaven or as a human being after this life--but you cannot escape from the revolving wheel of Birth-and-Death and cannot get to the World of Ultimate Bliss.

If you want to be in the World of Ultimate Bliss, you must cultivate wisdom. Wisdom can be cultivated through the recitation of Buddha's name. It is important that you distinguish wisdom from good fortune. Do not confuse them and miss the chance of going to the World of Ultimate Bliss.

6.2 The common excuse of "I am too busy to recite Buddha's name" .

By reciting Buddha's name, you can ease your difficult life, avoid disasters and be born in the World of Ultimate Bliss. Thus, do not take it lightly. Do not use the excuse of having no time to let this opportunity slip away. Being too busy is not really an excuse, because you can recite Buddha's name whether you are walking, sitting, or resting. Whether your vocation is education, farming, industry, or business, you can practice reciting without affecting your work. The following passage, called "Not Busy," will show that you are not too busy to recite

Buddha's name.

Not Busy

You are really not busy, yet insist that you are. There are 24 hours in a day: 8 hours for sleep, 3 hours for meals, 1 hour for tea, cigarettes, and bathroom breaks, at least 2 hours to go out for a drink and to return home and chat, 2 hours for a nap-- making a total of 16 hours. You may not have many things to do for the remaining 8 hours. You cannot say it's too time consuming if you devote just half an hour to recite Buddha's name. If you want to put off reciting Buddha's name until a future time, you should remember that life is as fleeting as a breath and death makes no distinction between the young and the old. Do not forget the suffering of the birth-death cycle. Getting rid of birth-death suffering, and being born in the World of Ultimate Bliss is the most important business.

Appendix: Important guidelines when reciting Buddha's name

When reciting Buddha's name, you must set everything aside and concentrate. Buddha's name must be initiated from your mind, recited by your mouth, enter into your ears, and register in your mind. You must think clearly, recite clearly, and hear clearly. Only in this way you can get a result.

Clearing up Some Misconceptions.

1. Some people say: We live in a dormitory or other shared quarters. It is inconvenient to bow and worship Buddha. We would disturb other people if we recite.

Answer: It is true there are some inconveniences in reciting in a public place. But if you realize that reciting Buddha's name is an important affair, you can sincerely recite it in your mind without making a sound, and you shall benefit fully. It is not necessary to worship and bow in front of a portrait of Buddha if that is inconvenient; the most important thing is to be sincere.

2. Some say: I do not have time to visit a Buddhist monastery, temple or lotus society.

Answer: You do not have to go to those places to practice Buddhism. You can recite Buddha's name at home.

3. Some say: Reciting Buddha's name is for those who

have money-- I do not have money for this.

Answer: There is no need to spend any money. Worshipping Buddha with 3 sticks of incense does not cost much. You even do not have to have incense. The only thing you need is to be respectful and sincere in your mind.

4. Some say: One must be a vegetarian to practice Buddhism. I cannot be a vegetarian.

Answer: You do not have to be a vegetarian for the time being. The important rule is not to kill. If you can avoid killing animals, you shall be credited with great virtues. You can eat "three-pure meat" for your meals. "Three-pure meat" has the following conditions: The animal was not specifically killed for you; you did not witness the killing; and you did not hear the killing. There is plenty of meat and fish (not live) in the markets that is "three-pure meat".

Proper Nouns	特別名詞
Amitabha (or A Mi To) Buddha	阿彌陀佛
Amitabha (or A Mi To) Sutra	阿彌陀經
Bodhisattva	菩薩
Chih Chê	智者
Flower-Adornment Assembly	華嚴會
Great Pure Sea of Bodhisattvas	清淨大海眾菩薩
Hsü Yun and Yüan Ying of the Chan school	禪宗虛雲圓瑛
Hung I of the Vinaya School	律宗弘一
Hui Yüan	慧遠
Kuan Shih Yin Bodhisattva	觀世音菩薩
Kuan Yin	觀音
Li Ping Nan	李炳南
Liu Lei of Lu Shan in the Chin Dynasty	晉朝廬山劉雷
Lung Shu (or Nagarjuna)	龍樹
Ma ming (or Ashvagosha)	馬鳴
Pai Lê T'ien of the T'ang Dynasty	唐朝白樂天
P'eng Ch'ih Mu and Yang Jên Shan of the Ch'ing Dynasty	清朝彭天木楊仁山

P'u Hsien (or Samantabhadra or Universal Worthy)	普賢
Shâkyamuni Buddha	釋迦牟尼佛
Su Tung P'o and Wên Yen Po of the Sung Dynasty	宋朝蘇東坡文彥博
Ta Shih Chih (or Great Strength) Bodhisattva	大勢至菩薩
Tai Hsü of the Consciousness-Only School	唯識宗太虛
T'an Luan	曇鸞
Ti Hsien of the Heavenly Platform (T'ien T'ai) school	天台宗諦閑
Wen Shu (or Manjushri)	文殊
Yin Kuang	印光
Yüan Hung Tao of the Ming Dynasty	明朝袁宏道

Books and Sutras	佛書佛經
An Introduction to Buddhism	佛法導論
An Introduction to the Path of Pure-Land for Beginners	初機淨業指南
Complete Works of An Shih	安士全書
Contemplating Limitless Life Sutra	觀無量壽經
Essays of Dharma Master Yin Kuang	印光法師文鈔
Limitless Life Sutra	無量壽經
Lung Shu's Essay on The Pure-Land	龍舒淨土文
Out of Wrong Paths to the Right Path	歧路指歸
Rebirth Mantra	往生咒
Sutra on the Ten Paths of Good Karma	十善業道經
Ten Essentials of Pure-Land Doctrine	淨土十要
Three Ingredients in the Path of Pure-Land	淨土三要述義
Verse in praise of Buddha	讚佛偈

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The Teachings Of Great Master Yin Guang

Thether one is a layperson or has left the home-life, one should respect elders and be harmonious to those surrounding him. One should endure what others cannot, and practice what others cannot achieve. One should take others' difficulties unto oneself and help them succeed in their undertakings. While sitting quietly, one should often reflect upon one's own faults, and when chatting with friends, one should not discuss the rights and wrongs of others. In every action one makes, whether dressing or eating, from dawn to dusk and dusk 'till dawn, one should not cease to recite the

Buddha's name. Aside from Buddha recitation, whether reciting quietly or silently, one should not give rise to other improper thoughts. If wandering thoughts appear, one should immediately dismiss them. Constantly maintain a humble and repentful heart; even if one has upheld true cultivation, one should still feel one's practice is shallow and never boast. One should mind one's own business and not the business of others. Only look after the good examples of others instead of bad ones. One should see oneself as mundane and everyone else as Bodhisattvas. If one can cultivate according to these teachings, one is sure to reach the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Homage to Amitabha! Amitabha!

What is taking refuge?

The Teachings of Venerable Master Chin Kung

Taking Refuge means to return and rely. From where do we return from and to what do we rely upon? When we take refuge in the Buddha, we are returning from our deluded state of mind and relying upon an Awakened, Understanding mind. When we take refuge in the Dharma, we are returning from deviant views and relying upon proper views and understanding. When we take refuge in the Sangha, we are returning from pollution and disharmony and relying upon Purity of Mind and the Six Principles of Living in Harmony. Taking refuge in the Triple Jewels restores the complete wisdom and abilities of our Self-Nature. We will attain Purity, Equality, Honesty, Contentment, Compassion, and overall, True Happiness.

To the Buddha I return and rely, returning from delusions and relying upon Awareness and Understanding.

To the Dharma I return and rely, returning from erroneous views and relying upon Proper Views and Understanding.

To the Sangha I return and rely, returning from pollutions and disharmony and relying upon Purity of Mind and the Six Principles of Living in Harmony.



The Ten Recitation Method

The Teachings of Venerable Master Chin Kung

The Ten Recitation method is a simple, convenient, and effective way of practicing Buddha Recitation. It is especially suitable for those who find little time in the day for cultivation. Practicing the Ten Recitation method helps us to regain mindfulness of Amitabha Buddha and brings us peace and clarity to the present moment.

The practice begins first thing in the morning when we wake up. We should sit up straight and clearly recite Amitabha's name ten times with an undisturbed mind, whether out loud or silently to ourselves. We repeat the process eight more times for the rest of the day:

- 2) At Breakfast
- 3) Before Work
- 4) At Lunch Break
- 5) At Lunch

- 6) After Lunch Break
- 7) Getting Off Work
- 8) At Dinner
- 9) At Bedtime

Altogether, the method is practiced nine times a day, everyday. The key point in this cultivation is regularity; we must not practice one day and not the other. If this practice can be maintained undisturbed, the cultivator would soon feel his purity of mind increase, and wisdom grow.

Diligent practice of the Ten Recitation method together with deep faith and determined vows can ensure fulfillment of our wish to reach the Western Pure Land of Infinite Life and Infinite Light. We hope everyone will practice accordingly.

Amitabha!

♦ The Pure Land Learning Center ♦

The Teachings of Venerable Master Chin Kung

A PATH TO TRUE HAPPINESS



True Sincerity towards others Purity Of Mind within

Equality

in everything we see

Proper Understanding

of ourselves and our environment

Compassion

helping others in a wise and unconditional way



See Through

to the truth of impermanence

Let Go

of all wandering thoughts and attachments

Freedom

of mind and spirit

Accord With Conditions

go along with the environment

Be Mindful Of Amitabha Buddha

wishing to reach the Pure Land and follow in His Teachings

herever the Buddha's teachings have been received, either in cities or countrysides, people would gain inconceivable benefits. The land and people would be enveloped in peace. The sun and moon will shine clear and bright. Wind and rain would appear accordingly. and there will be no disasters. Nations would be prosperous and there would be no use for soldiers or weapons. People would abide by morality and accord with laws. They would be courteous and humble, and everyone would be content without injustices. There would be no thefts or violence. The strong would not dominate the weak and everyone would be settled at their proper place in society."

The Sutra of Amitabha's Purity, Equality, and Understanding

DEDIGATION OF MERIT

May the merit and virtues accrued from this work,
Adorn the Buddha's Pure Land,
Repaying the four kinds
of kindness above,
and relieving the sufferings of those in the Three Paths below.

May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the heart of
Understanding,
And live the Teachings for
the rest of this life,
Then be born together in
The Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Homage to Amitabha Buddha!

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As this is a Dhamma text,

We request that it be treated with respect.

If you are finished with it,

Please pass it on to others or

offer it to a monastery, school, or library.

Thanks for your co-operation.

Namo Amitabha!



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