

HOW TO LIVE A LIFE OF CONTENTMENT AND HAPPINESS

Translated from a Dharma Talk by Grand Master Wei Chueh

A life without contentment is a life of afflictions. Happy is he who is content. Thoughts of contentment and happiness have positive effects on our lives. Buddhist scripture says, “A contented person is as happy as one who enjoys many blessings in heaven; a discontented person is as miserable as one who suffers in hell.” Those who are always satisfied with what they have will be peaceful and happy. On the other hand, discontented people are too greedy to be satisfied so they tend to become distressed, resentful, dishonest, and vicious, which causes them to suffer. Even if their realities are the same, their experience will be very different.

In order to value our work and get along with others, having an attitude of contentment and happiness is critical. No one can accomplish a task alone – the cooperation of others is always necessary. Buddhist scripture says, “Dedicate merits to the triple jewels.” We should praise benevolent deeds done by others and reflect on our own unwholesome deeds. Maintaining this positive viewpoint is the way to contentment and happiness. Contented people are always happy and energetic. Discontented people usually attribute their failure to anything except themselves. For example, they might blame an unfavorable social system or unhelpful friends for their unsuccessful careers. If we are contented, we will be aware of, be grateful for, and return the kindness of others. Hence, our life will be full of hope and happiness.

If we had a hundred thousand dollars, many of us would desire a million dollars, and, having obtained a million dollars, would dream of having ten million. When we have this type of attitude, there is never an end to the vicious cycle. We create afflictions and stress for ourselves and always feel insecure. To change our perspective to one of contentment and gratitude, we could think instead, “It was difficult to get this job

because it is the result of so many opportunities and so much help from others.” Consequently, we would seize every moment and work hard. Truly appreciating and respecting our job is what it means to value our work. Being grateful to society, people, and coworkers is what it means to get along with others. With these attitudes, we will be happy and contented with our life.

The Buddhist scripture says, “Return the four kindnesses; relieve the suffering of three lower realms.” We should be aware of, be grateful for, and return the kindness of others, such as the kindness of our parents, teachers, society, and country. At every stage of our life, they have helped us in our studies and occupations. We were born to and nurtured by parents, teachers imparted the knowledge and skills for us to make a living, our society and country provide us with jobs and security, and people from all walks of life live and work together to make society function. Without everyone’s contributions, we could not meet basic needs nor have promising careers, no matter how wealthy we are. Everyone in society helps us directly or indirectly. Therefore, we should be aware of, be grateful for, and return the kindness of others. This is a positive and active attitude toward life. 🌀