

Buddhism:
Your Questions Answered

***-Frequently Asked Questions
About Practising Buddhism***

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Questions About Practising Buddhism

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Preface

Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva (Guan Yin Bodhisattva, or otherwise known as Guan Zi Zai Bodhisattva in Chinese, Avalokitesvara in Sanskrit), is a Bodhisattva with immense loving kindness and compassion. With immeasurable wisdom and miraculous powers, she comes to the aid of those in hardship and difficulty. She attained Buddhahood countless eons ago, and is known as “the Buddha of True Dharma Light”. However, due to her great vow and strong affinity with sentient beings, Guan Yin Bodhisattva returned to the world to rescue all the sentient beings from suffering.

Guan Yin Bodhisattva, Manjusri Bodhisattva (who embodies great wisdom), Samantabhadra Bodhisattva (great practice), and Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva (great vows), are widely known as the Four Great Bodhisattvas. She is also one of the “Three Saints of the Western Pure Land,” along with Amitabha Buddha and Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva.

Out of deep compassion, Guan Yin Bodhisattva hears the desperate cries of sentient beings and acts to alleviate their suffering. She responds to all prayers, and never abandons a single life. There have been innumerable miraculous stories about Guan Yin Bodhisattva beginning in ancient times, hence the old saying in China: “Every family pays respect to Amitabha Buddha; every household prays to Guan Yin Bodhisattva.”

For thousands of years, Guan Yin Bodhisattva has manifested in

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many different forms to help people. According to the *Lotus Sutra*, “If there were living beings who would be liberated by a certain form of being, then Guan Yin Bodhisattva would appear as that form of being to speak the Dharma.” In Chinese history, figures said to be the manifestations of Guan Yin Bodhisattva include Liu Sa He (4th-5th century) of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, Chan Master Bao Zhi Gong (5th-6th century) of the Southern Dynasties, Venerable Master Sengqie (7th-8th century) of the Tang Dynasty and so forth. They did not shy away from using their spiritual power to perform miracles.

Today, Master Jun Hong Lu, the founder of Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door, is also widely regarded as a manifestation of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. With his Dharma eye and great spiritual power, Master Lu crystallizes the law of cause and effect and the working of karma. By performing “Totem Reading” based upon someone’s year of birth, gender, and Chinese zodiac sign, he reveals their past, present and future, and points out what truly causes the ups and downs in our daily lives.

The result is immediate and obvious: For the benefit of ourselves and others, we need to refrain from evil and practise only good deeds. We must be mindful of our intentions and actions at every moment, and stop creating negative karma in our everyday lives. By practising Buddhism, cultivating our minds and changing our behaviour, having paid off our karmic debts and refrained from accruing new ones, we can truly transform our destiny and be liberated from suffering.

Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door teaches us to repay our karmic debts by following the “Three Golden Buddhist Practices”: reciting Buddhist scriptures, making great vows and performing life liberations. These practices lay a solid foundation for improved physical and mental well-being. They have also been proved to be helpful in curing illnesses, resolving interpersonal conflicts and increasing one’s spiritual strength and wisdom. Due to Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door’s effectiveness and efficiency, it has been taken up by 10 million people in a very short period of time.

Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door belongs to the Mahayana Buddhist tradition. It is transmitted directly by Guan Yin Bodhisattva through Master Lu. For decades, he has been devoted to spreading the message of compassion and Buddhist teachings via his radio station and the Internet.

His advice is based entirely on the teachings and practices of traditional Buddhism. Day in and day out, he has been tirelessly helping people without asking for anything in return—a powerful expression of Guan Yin Bodhisattva’s compassion towards people no matter who they are or where they are from.

Buddhism: Your Questions Answered—Frequently Asked Questions About Practising Buddhism provides answers to common Buddhist questions, and guides those people who have an affinity with Buddhism in their practice of traditional Buddhism. As we progress in our spiritual practice, we

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strengthen our faith in the ability to change destiny and free ourselves from suffering. As we grow in wisdom and accumulate merits and virtues, we can transcend the prisons of ignorance, anger, fear and desire, and arrive at true inner peace and liberation.

We hope that more people can learn and practise the wonderful Buddhist practice of Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door— To embark upon Guan Yin Bodhisattva’s vessel of compassion to purify the minds, be free from afflictions and suffering, pay off karmic debts, help others awaken and elevate spiritually, spread the Dharma far and wide, and finally arrive at the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss and the Four Sagely Realms (i.e. Sravaka, Pratyekabuddha, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas).

Secretariat

Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door

April 2018

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Key Functions of Buddhist Sutras and Mantras for Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door Practitioners

Sutra or Mantra	Key Functions
<i>Great Compassion Mantra</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fulfil wishes• Strengthen power• Cure illnesses
<i>Heart Sutra</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calm fluctuating moods and emotions• Gain wisdom
<i>Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repent wrongdoings from the past• Eliminate karmic obstacles
<i>Cundi Dharani</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fulfil wishes (e.g. career, marriage, academic achievement)
<i>Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resolve interpersonal conflicts (e.g. among couples, colleagues, family members, etc.)
<i>Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resolve troubles such as lawsuits, financial loss, sudden illnesses, or impending disasters
<i>Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help the spirits of animals (e.g. poultry, seafood and insects) that you may have killed in the past to ascend to a higher spiritual realm
<i>Da Ji Xiang Tian Nü Zhou</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliminate poverty, all types of misfortune and attain happiness• Fulfil wishes in a marriage or relationship
<i>Gong De Bao Shan Shen Zhou</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transform good deeds into merits and virtues• Eliminate karmic obstacles
<i>Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliminate minor karmic obstacles generated recently or during this lifetime
<i>Sheng Wu Liang Shou Jue Ding Guang Ming Wang Tuo Luo Ni</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extend one's lifespan (especially for the elderly or those suffering from severe illnesses)
<i>Ru Yi Bao Lun Wang Tuo Luo Ni</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attain success• Receive blessings of Buddha's light
<i>Guan Yin Ling Gan Zhen Yan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fulfil wishes quickly

** For more details, please refer to **Q&A 71 and Q&A 72: Introduction to Buddhist sutras and mantras.***

1. A beginner's question about *Little Houses* recitation

Q: I am a beginner and have never recited *Little Houses* before. I recently began reciting the ***Great Compassion Mantra***, the ***Heart Sutra***, and the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***. Can I now recite the sutras and mantras of the *Little Houses*¹?

A:

As a beginner, you can recite the sutras and mantras of *Little Houses* as soon as you begin performing daily recitations (i.e. the ***Great Compassion Mantra***, the ***Heart Sutra***, and the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***). Initially, you can recite 7 *Little Houses*, addressing them to your karmic creditors. Afterwards, you should continue to recite *Little Houses* (the exact number of *Little Houses* required depends upon your individual situation).

In general, as you continue your daily recitations, you could recite and burn around 3 *Little Houses* each week addressed to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>” to prevent misfortune. You will need to give additional *Little Houses* if you come across the following situations: Deceased people or aborted babies appear in your dreams, you have nightmares, sudden illnesses or misfortune, or you constantly lose your temper for no reason. These situations indicate that you have karmic creditors, so you will need to give additional *Little Houses* to them.

The following scenarios provide a useful rule of thumb for *Little*

¹ See Appendix A: Sample Little House

House recitation:

- If you dream about deceased people, you will need to recite *7 Little Houses* for each of them, and address the *Little Houses* to “<full name of the deceased>”. If you do not know the name of the deceased person, you can address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”.
- If you dream about being paralysed and are unable to move due to a spiritual attack, or if you dream about someone chasing after you, giving or asking for money or gifts, treating you to a meal, etc., then you can recite 4 to *7 Little Houses* first and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”.
- If you experience sudden illnesses or misfortune, you can recite *7 Little Houses* first and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”.
- If you lose your temper easily, or if you have frequent conflicts with people around you for no particular reason, you can recite *7 Little Houses* first and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”.
- Your intuition is very important. If you sense that foreign spirits are occupying your body, you can recite 4 to *7 Little Houses* first and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”.
- If you have had an abortion, miscarriage, or ectopic pregnancy, you need to recite at least 7 to 21 *Little Houses* for each child. You can address them to “Child of <mother’s full name>”. Avoid adding any extra phrases, such as “Aborted child of <full name>”, or “Nth child of <full name>”, etc. If you dream about well-dressed and happy children

after you have recited the *Little Houses*, this means that they have most likely ascended to a higher spiritual realm. However, if the children appear to be in an unfavourable condition in your dream, then this means that they have not yet ascended to a higher spiritual realm, so you should continue reciting *Little Houses* for them.

2. Lodging the *Application for Change of Name*

Q: Should we burn the *Application for Change of Name*² after praying to Guan Yin Bodhisattva for her blessing? When, where, and how should we proceed with this? I just downloaded the form and would like to use it for my child and myself. Please advise me on how to lodge the *Application for Change of Name*.

A:

- A person's name represents his or her spirit, meaning that whenever a person's name is called, his or her soul and spirit will follow. Our original names that were given to us upon birth are not only written down on our birth certificates, but are also registered in the spiritual realms: the heaven and underworld. If you have changed names and used your new name for years, it is likely that your new name has become active spiritually. In this case, you can use your new name in performing your daily recitations and addressing your *Little Houses*. However, it would be best to lodge the *Application for Change of Name* to ensure that your new name is

² See Appendix B: Sample Application for Change of Name

registered in the spiritual realms.

- When you lodge the *Application for Change of Name*, you are updating your new name with Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and officers who oversee matters related to name changes in the heaven and the underworld, and with other spiritual beings. Note that there is no need to update your name on your birth certificate, IDs, or any other documents.
- You can download the *Application for Change of Name* form at www.GuanYinCitta.com. Use yellow A4 paper to print out the form.
- Fill in both the applicant’s original and new name on the application form.
- Write the original name where it says, “Devotee’s original full name”, and the new name where it says, “Now changed to” and “Devotee’s full name”.
- Fill in the applicant’s date of birth according to the Gregorian calendar.
- Fill in your current location, which is the location where you are going to perform the ritual to lodge *the Application for Change of Name*, in the “Location” field (e.g. “Beijing, China” or “Sydney, Australia”). Finally, fill in the date field, using the date of burning the application form.
- It is best to burn the application form on sunny days. The best times are 6am, 8am, and 4pm.
- You can also hand-write, instead of printing, the form on a piece of yellow paper based on the *Application for Change of Name* form at www.GuanYinCitta.com.
- You can lodge the application form at home if you have a Buddhist altar. First, light the oil lamps, offer incense and

read out the application in front of your altar (you may kneel while reading it). Then recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times and the **Heart Sutra** 7 times before burning the application form (from top to bottom).

- If you do not have a Buddhist altar in your home, you can go to a Buddhist temple to lodge the application.

You should first kneel and bow to every Buddha and Bodhisattva at the temple, then read out your application in the Guan Yin Hall, in front of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, “I, <your full name>, come to <name of the temple> today, to pay my respect to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in this temple. May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva be my witness and verify that my original name <old name> has been changed to <new name>. May all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in this temple be my witnesses.” Next recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times and the **Heart Sutra** 7 times before burning your application form (from top to bottom) in the container where incense sticks or papers are burnt.

- Generally speaking, you only need to lodge the application once. If, for some reason, you think that your change of name application did not go through, you can lodge it again.
- It is best to lodge your *Application for Change of Name* yourself. If the applicant is a child who is too young to perform the ritual, his or her parents or elders may lodge the change of name application for the applicant.
- There is no need to lodge a change of name application for a deceased person; just use the name that they used most often while they were alive.

- If you have been called by several names in the past, and now you want to lodge *the Application for Change of Name*, you can pick the name that has been used most often as your original name (generally names that have been used for more than a decade are already active spiritually), or you can write all the names ever used in the past under “Devotee’s original full name.”
- If you are unsure of what your original name is, in cases of adoption where you never found out your birth name, you may lodge the *Application for True Name*. Download the *Application for True Name* from www.GuanYinCitta.com. A sample can be found in **Appendix C**.
- To determine whether your *Application for Change of Name* has been successfully lodged, address your *Little Houses* to the “Karmic Creditor of <your new full name>” and assess their effectiveness after burning those *Little Houses*. Suppose you have been unwell physically, lacking energy, or experiencing nightmares, but you feel much better after burning the *Little Houses* with your new name on them, this indicates that your application for a change of name has been successful. Please refer to **Q&A 81: How to determine if an *Application for Change of Name* is successful**.

3. How do you resolve conflicts in marriage or in a relationship?

Q: Master Lu, how do we resolve “predestined conflicts”—conflicts between couples or conflicts in marriage? We follow the instruction of your Buddhist practice—Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door—to recite sutras and mantras. But I still cannot

wrap my head around the issue.

I recite the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots** every day, but still hope that you could give us a clear solution to this problem. “Predestined conflicts” in relationships can be damaging, as I’ve seen many couples around me breaking up because of them.

A:

“Predestined conflicts” between married couples do exist. If the result of fortune-telling confirms that a husband and his wife are in conflict based on both their birth dates, you could consider employing the following methods to resolve the conflict:

- First, it’s recommended that the couple sleep in different rooms.
- Each person should recite the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots** 21 or 49 times per day to resolve their karmic conflicts.
- The rate of effectiveness for resolving a couple’s conflicts by reciting the following sutras and mantras could be around 50% (results vary from person to person):
 - Recite the **Heart Sutra** for each other 7 or 21 times per day.
 - Recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** to repent and eliminate the karmic obstacles that lead to the conflict in marriage or in a relationship.
- If the situation has not been turned around after practising all the above-mentioned methods for quite some time, you will need to recite *Little Houses* for each other. Address the *Little Houses* to the “Karmic Creditor of <your partner’s name>”. You can recite more *Little Houses* if necessary.

4. How do we know if there are foreign spirits occupying our bodies?

Q: The telephone line of Master Lu’s call-in radio programs is very busy, so we are not always able to get through and ask him to perform Totem Readings for us to solve our issues related to foreign spirits. We would like to know when we no longer need to recite *Little Houses*?

What would be the signs indicating that we can solely focus on our own spiritual development and no longer need to recite sutras to help karmic creditors ascend to a higher spiritual realm?

A:

- If you experience headaches while performing recitations (and not at any other times), this is a sign that your karmic creditors need you to recite *Little Houses*. You should recite *7 Little Houses* first, addressed to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>.”
- If you dream about deceased family members or friends, you should recite *7 Little Houses* for each of them, and address the *Little Houses* to the <full name of the deceased>. It is best to recite *21 Little Houses* for each of your deceased family member/relative.
- If you are sick, for example, having a fever, it usually means you have karmic creditors. You should recite *7 Little Houses* first, addressed to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>.”
- If you constantly lose your temper, or if you have frequent conflicts with people around you for no reason, you should recite *7 Little Houses* first, addressed to the “Karmic Creditor

of <your full name>.”

- If you hear strange noises at home, in your kitchen, from your television, or if the lights go on and off on their own (and they are not faulty), you should recite 4 to 7 *Little Houses*, addressed to the “Karmic Creditor of the house of <full name of the occupant>.”
- If you have been experiencing a lot of bad luck for a period of time, you can recite 7 *Little Houses* first, addressed to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>.”
- If you recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 3 times a day as part of your daily recitation, then you should recite approximately 3 *Little Houses* every week, addressed to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>.”
- The number of *Little Houses* required can be determined instinctively. In any of the above situations, if you find that your problem is not completely resolved after completing the first batch of *Little Houses*, you will then need to recite more.
- If everything is going smoothly in your life, you are in good health, and have pleasant dreams every night, it is best not to recite too many *Little Houses*. You can offer around 3 *Little Houses* every week, addressed to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>,” to help you stay safe and prevent misfortune.

Do not burn more than 5 *Little Houses* per day to your karmic creditors when everything is going smoothly.

In emergency situations, or when experiencing a chronic illness, you can burn more *Little Houses*, but no more than 21 *Little Houses* a day.

5. Placement of a Buddhist altar

Q: Could Master Lu advise on the basic requirements and areas of concern regarding the placement of a Buddhist altar in the home from a Buddhist perspective? Thank you!

A:

The basic requirements for Buddhist altar placement in the home are as follows:

- The altar must not be near a toilet (the toilet door should be closed at all times).
- The altar must not directly face the kitchen.
- The altar must not be placed on top of the television, refrigerator, or directly below an air conditioner. If it is close to the television or in an untidy environment, you can use a cabinet with a wooden door for the altar. When you are not offering incense, you can close the door. When you are offering incense, do not switch on the television. You should also not cover the statues or images of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas with a glass dome.
- You should not place the Buddhist altar in the bedroom of a couple (the bedroom of an elderly couple may be acceptable).
- You can place the Buddhist altar in single bedrooms, but the foot of the bed should not face the altar.
- You should not place the altar on a balcony extending out from the building (i.e. not attached to the ground). However, if the balcony is inside the building then it would be fine, e.g. sunroom.
- All statues and images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, as well

as other Dharma instruments, including incense burners, oil lamps, etc. should not be placed on an extended fixture (jutting out over empty space). In other words, there must be tables, cabinets or frames, etc. that are connected to the ground to hold up the items.

- The best location to make offerings and pray to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is near a window where it is bright. The back of the Buddhist altar should not be facing a window. The altar must be placed against a wall, and there should not be any mirrors in its surroundings.
- Do not place unrelated objects or books underneath the altar. Sutras and Dharma instruments would be alright.
- The altar should not be too high or too low. It would be best if the statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on your altar are slightly above eye level (if they are too low, you can place something, such as a nice box, underneath to raise their height).
- On the altar, there should be oil lamps (refilling the oil lamps with oil can improve your eye health), and water (one cup of water for each statue or image of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The water should be changed daily. Do not drink the water directly from the cup used for offerings).
- There should be a burner for the offering of incense. You can make an incense offering once in the morning and once at night. The time for incense offerings should be kept consistent. The best times for the morning offerings are 6am, 8am and 10am, and the best times for night offerings are 6pm, 8pm and 10pm.
- It is best not to have too many statues or images of Buddhas

and Bodhisattvas on the altar.

- If conditions allow, you can make offerings of fresh fruit (allowing wishes to come true more quickly) and fresh flowers (offering fresh flowers can improve your physical appearance). Generally, fruit and flower offerings should be made once a week.
- The best location for the altar is sitting south and facing north (for the Southern Hemisphere), or sitting north and facing south (for the Northern Hemisphere). However, if your current living conditions do not allow you to place the altar facing these directions, then other directions are also acceptable.

6. Lodging the *Application for Convincing Family Members*

Q: During one of Master Lu’s radio programs, you mentioned that we can write the name and date of birth of our family member(s) on a piece of paper, and bring it to the Guan Yin Citta Centre to pray for our family member(s) so that they will soon believe in Buddhism. I want to give this a try. Can I do this at the Buddhist altar at home? Do I need to lodge an application for this?

A:

- It is a great blessing that both partners in a marriage, or the entire family, perform recitations and practise Buddhism together.

If you have already started practising Buddhism, you can gradually introduce it to your family members. You can give

your family members some of Master Lu’s books, and ask them to listen to the radio programs if they understand Chinese. You could say, “These books and programs are really interesting, we should study them together”. If your family members are not interested, you cannot force them. It is best to act in accordance with karmic conditions, not cling to them.

- You can recite the **Heart Sutra** at least 7 times per day for each of your family members. Before you begin your recitation, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect <your family member’s name>, help <family member> to gain wisdom, believe in Buddhism and start performing recitations.” You can continue doing this for as long as necessary.
- When you recite the **Heart Sutra** for your family members, it is best not to tell them to prevent them from feeling uncomfortable or offended, which can easily lead them to create karma of speech. If your family members still do not believe in Buddhism after more than a month of reciting **Heart Sutra** (7 times per day), you can lodge an application to Guan Yin Bodhisattva and state your prayer.
- Download the *Application for Convincing Family Members* from www.GuanYinCitta.com. Print the application form on a yellow A4 piece of paper (Caution: Do not burn this application form). A sample can be found in **Appendix D**.
- Use a black or blue pen to write the full name and date of birth (e.g. 31 December 2011) of your family member (according to the Gregorian calendar), and your full name.

- During the daytime on a daily basis (the best times are 6am, 8am, 4pm, and 10pm; it is best to avoid night time), light oil lamps and make incense offerings at your home altar.
- Read out the text on the application form once, and then place the application form on the Buddhist altar. If your altar has limited space, you can place the application form underneath the incense burner.
- Kneel and make a full bow (with your forehead touching the floor) to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- Recite the **Heart Sutra**, generally 7 times or more.
- Once you have completed your recitations or the incense has finished burning, it is best to fold the *Application for Convincing Family Members* and put it away. The *Application for Convincing Family Members* must not be left on the altar for a long period of time, as this may cause the relevant family member to have fits of temper, and their soul to depart from their body or be incomplete.
- The above procedure for lodging the *Application for Convincing Family Members* can be performed once a day.
- After a month of lodging the *Application for Convincing Family Members*, you have to stop for a week. Otherwise, your merits and virtues will go to the relevant family member(s). But during this week, you can continue reciting the **Heart Sutra** for your family members.
- This is a very serious Buddhist practice and it is best performed after you have recited the **Heart Sutra** 7 times per day for your family members over a long period of time (usually longer than one month). It is best to perform this without informing the relevant family members to prevent

them from feeling uncomfortable or offended, which can easily lead them to create karma of speech.

- Once the application has been successful, the application form can be put aside for one to two months. After this time, you can place the application form in an envelope and then dispose of it. Caution: Do not burn the application form.
- If you do not have a Buddhist altar in your home, please refer to **Q&A106: Lodging an *Application for Convincing Family Members without a Buddhist altar.***

7. Hanging landscape paintings

Q: Dear Master Lu, we would like to ask for your advice regarding landscape paintings of water and mountains. What are the guidelines for placing these paintings at home? Do we need to place these pictures behind the statues or images of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas? Can we place these paintings in other rooms of the house?

Is there anything about the landscape paintings that we should take note of, especially pertaining to the features about water? According to *Feng-shui*, it is not recommended to hang a painting featuring waterfalls. Also, what about the direction of the water flow? Is it true that the water should flow inwards instead of outwards? Ocean waves and huge tides are also not very good according to *Feng-shui*. Could you please let us know if there are other guidelines? Thank you very much.

A:

- There are many places that you can place landscape paintings of water and mountains:

- Behind statues or images of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, or behind the Buddhist altar to block negative energy;
- Above the toilet door on the outside (not on the toilet door. If the space between the door and the ceiling is too small, you can place it on the wall on either side of the toilet door) to prevent the negative energy from coming out (it is as if there is a mountain above the toilet door and there is water flowing underneath; your toilet door is just a small hole underneath the mountain, so the negative energy cannot escape);
- Above the bedroom door to prevent negative energy from entering the bedroom;
- If the doors of two rooms face each other, you can also place the paintings above the doors;
- Certain locations are unsuitable for large paintings, such as above the head of the bed, since it would be as if a mountain is pressing down on your head. Generally speaking, small paintings are alright.
- The best landscape paintings would feature a large mountain sitting above still water, with valleys and hills in the far background, but the mountains should not have sharp peaks (water flows, including still water). A waterfall in the landscape painting is fine as well, as long as the waterfall is not overly aggressive.
- Landscape paintings must be blessed to activate the water and mountains for the paintings to take effect.
- The painting can be an oil painting, a water/ink painting, a printed image, etc. as long as it does not appear artificial or unnatural.

- It is best not to use paintings by deceased artists, as these paintings tend to attract their spirits. Nor should the paintings contain large human or animal figures, as these figures also tend to attract foreign spirits.

8. Saying prayers before reciting *Little Houses*

Q: Master Lu, what should we say before we recite *Little Houses*? How do we pray to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for their blessings and protection?

A:

- Before reciting *Little Houses*, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva help me, <your full name>, to give these *Little Houses* to <name of the recipient> (The recipient can be your karmic creditor, a deceased relative or friend, an aborted or miscarried child, or a karmic creditor of your house). Keep your prayer short and simple; it is fine even if you do not say anything at all. Because as soon as our thoughts arise, they are precisely recorded in the spirit world.
- At first, you may write down the prayer, and read it each time before you recite *Little Houses*. Eventually you will be able to memorise it.
- Some foreign spirits, usually in the underworld or in the *Asura* realm, tend to transform the sutras and mantras they received into money or energy and spend it all, rather than going to a higher spiritual realm. If you have recited a large

number of *Little Houses* but the spirits have not ascended to a higher spiritual realm, it is best to pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva so that the spirits can transform the sutras and mantras into energy and ascend to a higher spiritual realm.

9. Suffering from headaches when performing recitations

Q: Master Lu, I have started to recite the *Little Houses* for the two babies that I aborted. I just finished the first *Little House* and I have been suffering from headaches for two days. What is going on? What should I do? Please kindly advise.

A:

- Generally, if you suffer from headaches when you perform recitations, this is a signal from spirits that you should speed up your progress in reciting *Little Houses*.
- It may be your deceased children or other karmic creditors who are giving you these signals. You must be persistent with your recitation of *Little Houses*.
- Now that you know how to recite *Little Houses*, it is normal for your karmic creditors to come and ask you to repay your karmic debts.
- Some people might say, “I might as well stop reciting, so I will not have to suffer from headaches.” This is not true. It is better to use *Little Houses* to repay your karmic debts now than repay your karmic debts in other forms later, such as suffering from illnesses, experiencing misfortune, being involved in car accidents, etc.
- For the recitation of *Little Houses* to be effective in helping

spirits ascend to a higher spiritual realm, you must perform your daily recitation as a foundation. In particular, you should diligently recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** to increase your spiritual power, so that you will become better at reciting *Little Houses*.

10. Having the toilet door closed at all times

Q: Master Lu, I have a question to ask you. You mentioned that we must always keep the bathroom door closed. If we close the door, there is no airflow. Once we open it, the air becomes very stuffy. As a result, we are now using the toilet with the door open. Do we need to close the door when we use the toilet? Some bathrooms have a small window, should we keep the window open? Some bathrooms also have exhaust fans, should we have them turned on as well? When there is no air circulation, the air is still stuffy even if we open the window. Moreover, can we hang our washed clothes in the bathroom to dry? Would negative energy get into the clothes?

A:

- The bathroom door should be closed at all times (including when you take a shower or bath and when you use the toilet). You mentioned that the air is stuffy when the door is always kept closed. This means that the bathroom has been affected by negative energy, and the energy has been trapped in the bathroom. It is much better to keep such negative energy inside the bathroom than release it to the rest of the house.

- You can place an air freshener in the bathroom, or a flush freshener in the toilet. They are not expensive and will improve the quality of the energy field.
- During the daytime, you can frequently have the window open or turn the exhaust fan on in the bathroom (it is best to close the window at night).
- If you hang your clothes in the bathroom, the negative energy will get into your clothes. In addition, it is best not to drink or boil water from the bathroom tap. The negative energy will affect the molecular structures in the water and make you unwell.
- You can place a landscape painting above the bathroom door on the outside. If the space between the door and the ceiling is too small, you can also place it on the wall on either side of the bathroom door.

11. Maintaining focus when performing recitations

Q: Master Lu, I currently face constant distractions and have wandering thoughts when I perform recitations. How can we maintain our focus while performing recitations? Please kindly advise.

A:

- One of the reasons for reduced effectiveness of recitations is the lack of focus. For example, if you are thinking about your family members while performing recitation for yourself, then a portion of your recitation may be dedicated to them instead.

- How can you maintain focus while performing recitations? Before you recite sutras or mantras, you can first gaze at the sky for one to three minutes and do not think about anything.
- When performing recitations, it is best to visualise what you have prayed for, or visualise the image of the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Then listen to your own voice mindfully while you recite, and your mind will not wander.
- When you recite the **Heart Sutra** as part of your daily recitation, you can add the following line to your prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, grant me wisdom and help me to maintain focus when I perform recitations”.
- If you are having too many distracting thoughts when you are performing recitations off by heart, you can take out your sutra booklet and follow it as a guidance.
- When performing recitations, you should unite your mind with your energy (combine your mind with your energy field to create a whole), unite your voice with your energy (combine your voice with your energy field to create a whole), and unite your body with your mind (combine your body with your mind to create a whole). If you can achieve these three unifying processes, your recitation will be very effective.

12. Experiencing tingling sensations when performing recitations

Q: Dear Master Lu, I am currently reciting the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times, the **Heart Sutra** 7 times, and the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 3 times in the morning. I experience tingling only when I recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance**. I do not have this feeling when I am not reciting. Moreover, the tingling occurs only in certain parts of my body. It is not intense, but just a mild tingling sensation.

A:

- If you experience tingling only when you recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance**, then this represents a response from your karmic obstacles. In fact, it presents the best opportunity for you to eliminate your karmic obstacles. (That is why listeners often call into Master Lu’s radio program and ask about the quantity and location of their karmic obstacles, so that they can specifically target certain areas.)
- The best solution to eliminating karmic obstacles is to recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance**, along with *Little Houses* (that is, a combination of designated sutras and mantras). As a rule of thumb, you can recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 3 times per day for two to three months, or 7 times per day for one month.

Before reciting, you should say, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to repent and

eliminate karmic obstacles in my < the parts of your body where you feel tingling>.”

During this period, you should also recite about 3 *Little Houses* per week, addressing them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”, until you have fully recovered. However, if you experience pain in that particular area of your body and the pain suddenly intensifies, then it is very likely that the karmic obstacles have been activated. You should burn 4 to 7 *Little Houses* right away.

13. Asking others to perform recitations for you

Q: Dear Master Lu, I was fortunate enough to have you perform a Totem Reading for me. You told me that I have a lot of karmic obstacles. I am aware that I am reaching older age and should repay my karmic debts as fast as possible. Can I invite a friend, a classmate, or a lay practitioner to help me by performing recitations? And if they recite *Little Houses* for me, would that be effective?

A:

- Asking someone to perform recitations for you is a very important issue. If the person you ask for help is kind and well-cultivated, then you will experience positive effects.
- However, if the person you ask for help is unreliable and dishonest, then not only will it be ineffective, this person is also likely to reduce your merits and virtues or even take them away from you.
- For example, if a shop owner asks a greedy person to be her

accountant, in the end, the accountant will become very rich and the shop owner will have no money left.

- Therefore, you should not ask any unfamiliar person to recite sutras or mantras for you. If necessary, find someone who is in good health. You must also have full knowledge of this person’s background. This person must also have sufficient spiritual power, merits and virtues, and a kind heart. He or she must be pure and clean (that is, have few karmic obstacles). It is best if you can ask someone who is also practising Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door to help you.

14. Walking under trees at night

Q: Master Lu, I often walk under trees when I walk home at night. I have been feeling scared recently, so I started to recite the ***Great Compassion Mantra*** while walking. I do not know the reason for this.

A:

- Trees belong to *Yin* energy (as opposed to *Yang*). Therefore, there is a saying, “green trees form a good shade”. When the heat from the sun is strong, people seek the shade of trees to avoid the sun. In fact, they are avoiding *Yang* (the sun) by hiding under a *Yin* object. It would be fine to seek shade under trees when exposed to the sun.
- At night, however, it would be best not to stay under trees, since night time belongs to *Yin* energy.
- Generally, Buddhist practitioners would not be affected much by this situation.
- When you walk under trees at night, you may recite the

Great Compassion Mantra. It is best to recite it silently, otherwise it may attract trouble.

15. Buddhist prayer beads

Q: Master Lu, what should we be aware of when we use Buddhist prayer beads while reciting sutras or mantras?

A:

- Prayer beads are Dharma instruments. Like all Dharma instruments, you must use them appropriately, and you should not misuse or misplace them. If you are unable to protect these Dharma instruments or use them mindfully, it would be better not to use them at all as it would be a form of disrespect towards Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- It is best to choose prayer beads that are made of wood, preferably sandalwood. The colour should not be too dark.
- A lay practitioner must not wear a strand of long prayer beads around the neck, as they are not eligible to do so. It is only suitable for Buddhist monks and nuns with over ten years of cultivation to wear the beads around the neck.
- Hold your prayer beads in your left hand, use your right thumb to count each bead, pulling it to the right as you finish reciting your sutra or mantra. Meanwhile, visualise the image of the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva while performing recitations.
- It is best not to hold the prayer beads with only one hand. Use both hands as instructed above.
- You can also use an electronic counter or your fingers to count the number of times a mantra or sutra is recited. You

can record it on a piece of paper, too. Visualise the image of the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva while performing recitations.

- A strand of 108 prayer beads made be worn around the neck is best not to be worn around your wrist.

16. Dreams about killing people and setting things on fire

Q: Master Lu, I have followed your instructions and have been performing daily recitations for about three months now. Recently I had a dream that I was fighting with someone and then I killed him. I was frightened when I woke up. Is this a bad sign?

A:

- If you have dreams about killing people, setting something on fire, chasing people, or being chased by others, this indicates that your soul has been to the underworld. These types of dreams usually have two connotations:
- The first meaning is that the dreamer is suffering from tremendous pressure and cannot let it go, leading to such dreams. This kind of dream usually occurs immediately after you fall asleep.
- The second meaning is that you are fighting with foreign spirits. This kind of dream usually occurs in the morning just before you wake up.

When you have this kind of dream, regardless if you won or lost, it would be best to resolve the conflict. You should recite *Little Houses* and address them to the “Karmic

Creditor of <your full name>”. 7 *Little Houses* are usually sufficient in this situation.

- If you dream about killing someone, you must recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 108 times as well as recite 21 *Little Houses* addressed to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”.

17. Having an extra breath in your mouth while burning *Little Houses*

Q: Master Lu, when I was burning *Little Houses*, I suddenly had an extra breath of air in my mouth. What does this mean? How should I breathe it out?

A:

- If you have an extra breath of air in your mouth while you burn *Little Houses*, it is very likely to be related to foreign spirits. You should breathe out the air, while thanking Guan Yin Bodhisattva in your mind.
- Foreign spirits enter and exit our body through several locations, including the neck, back of the head, eyes, mouth and forehead.
- When you exhale, you should do it slowly and gently. You do not need to stretch your mouth wide open; you can simply let the air exit through the spaces between your teeth.

18. Can we put away holy images when not praying to them?

Q: There is an old lady who lives with four or five people in one bedroom. The only bright place in the house is the bedroom. Can she take out the statues and images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas when she is performing recitations or prayers, and then put them away when she has finished?

A:

- This is not a good situation. It would be better not to have the statues or images at all.
- You can offer the “Heart Incense” in your mind while you pay respect to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Constantly taking out and putting away statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is disrespectful. It is like constantly staying at a hotel without having a proper home – it is not stable.
- We must be mindful. If your living place is small, or if some family members do not believe in Buddhism and often speak inappropriately, it is best not to have statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in your home for the moment to prevent other people from creating karma of speech.

19. Burning *Little Houses* without a Buddhist altar

Q: Dear Master Lu, how should I burn *Little Houses* if I do not have a Buddhist altar in my home?

A:

- It is best not to burn *Little Houses* in Buddhist temples.
- If you do not have a Buddhist altar in your home, you can burn the *Little Houses* on your balcony, near the window in your living room, or in the backyard.
- You should offer the “Heart Incense” and say, “I express my sincere gratitude to the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva” three times. You can then recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** once and the **Heart Sutra** once.
- Raise the *Little Houses* slightly above your head, visualise yourself kneeling down and bowing, and say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to give these *Little Houses* to <name of the recipient>”; the recipient can be your karmic creditor, a deceased person, an aborted or miscarried child, or the karmic creditor of someone’s house.
- When you are burning *Little Houses* (it is best to burn them from top to bottom, starting from the upper right-hand corner where it says, “Offer To”), you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me with your compassion.” You can then light the *Little Houses* using a lighter or matches. While you are burning *Little Houses*, simply say, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me with your compassion.” Do not recite or say anything further.
- After you have finished burning *Little Houses*, you can say

the following, "I bow in gratitude to the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva for helping me give these *Little Houses* to <name of the recipient>. I express my sincere gratitude to the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva for protecting and blessing me." (Visualise yourself kneeling down at the altar and performing a full bow so that your forehead touches the floor.)

You could also say corresponding prayers. For example, if you give *Little Houses* to the karmic creditor of <someone's full name>, you could pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to grant this person good health, safety and good fortune. If you use a *Little House* to resolve X's karmic conflicts, you could pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to help resolve the negative karmic affinity between X and Y.

- Ensure that the entire piece of paper is thoroughly burnt. You can use metal tweezers to hold the *Little House* while burning it.
- The best times to burn *Little Houses* are 8am, 10am and 4pm. Any other time during the day on a sunny day would also be fine. Generally speaking, the period between 6am and sunset is suitable for burning *Little Houses* if the weather is good. For more details please refer to another Master Jun Hong Lu's publication: *A Guide to Reciting the Combination of Buddhist Scriptures: Little Houses*.

20. Burying dead animals in your yard

Q: Dear Master Lu, my cat that had been with me for the past 12 years has just passed away. I buried it in my yard along with Buddhist sutras. Is this alright?

A:

- It is never a good idea to bury bodies in or near your home, whether it be dogs, cats or humans. It is best to take the body out from your yard, and bury it somewhere else. You should also recite the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** for the cat to help it ascend to a higher spiritual realm.
- Buddhist sutras and mantras are sacred; they must not be buried or burnt. Such action is extremely disrespectful to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and constitutes a major offence. You need to recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 21 times to sincerely repent of your wrongdoings. Committing such wrongdoings will bring bad luck.

21. Seeing golden light when performing recitations

Q: Dear Master Lu, some people see golden light when reciting Buddhist sutras and mantras, some see green light, and some have reportedly seen a golden halo on top of your head when you give Dharma talks. Could you please explain this?

A:

- The golden light is from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In many temples, there is a golden halo at the top of every statue of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. It is great if you see the golden light when performing recitations, as it means you have seen Buddhas or Bodhisattvas.
- Seeing green light indicates the presence of other spirits. In such cases, you would need to recite *Little Houses* for your karmic creditors.

22. Effects of reciting the *Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*

Q: Master Lu, are the effects of reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** for the purpose of accumulating merits and virtues different from the effects of reciting it for the purpose of eliminating karmic obstacles?

A:

- Sutras and mantras can be seen as medications that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas prescribe to us. However, for them to be effective, we need ingredients that can enhance their efficacy. The overall purpose of reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** is clear— to eliminate karmic obstacles. However, the prayers said before reciting this sutra can vary depending on the individual.
- If you are reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** to eliminate karmic obstacles, you can say the following before you recite, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to repent and eliminate

karmic obstacles.”

- If you are reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** to accumulate merits and virtues, you can say the following before you recite, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to accumulate merits and virtues.”

If you do not have many karmic obstacles, your recitation of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** will automatically be transformed into merits and virtues. In fact, the process of eliminating karmic obstacles itself increases your own merits and virtues.

- When the black patches of karmic obstacles on your body are greatly reduced, you will become cleaner and purer. This makes it easier for the sutras and mantras that you recite, including the ***Great Compassion Mantra***, the ***Heart Sutra***, and the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***, to be gradually stored within you.
- Why do some people find performing recitations ineffective or not efficacious? It is because they have accumulated far too many karmic obstacles. Therefore, it is very important to recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** to eliminate our karmic obstacles. If your karmic obstacles are activated and transformed into spirits, then you would need to recite *Little Houses* and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”.

23. Purpose of reciting the *Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*

Q: Master Lu, my friend and I are following Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door, and reciting Buddhist sutras and mantras. After reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***, my friend dreamt about people asking her for *Little Houses*. My friend was so scared that she stopped performing recitations. Could you please explain the purpose of reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***?

A:

- When a person steals something, kills a dog or a person, or commits any wrongdoings, a cloud or patch of dark energy will arise in their mind. This cloud of dark energy will then enter this person's body. These dark clouds of energy are commonly known as karmic obstacles.

When Master Lu states that a person has a lot of heavy dark energy on their Totem, it means that this person has committed many wrongdoings, both in past lives and in their present life. The more such dark energy accumulated within the body, the more likely this person will encounter problems regarding their health, career, relationship, etc.

- Suppose explosives represent karmic obstacles. When a person has accumulated a large quantity of karmic obstacles in their body, it is similar to having a lot of explosives stored in their body. Once this person has committed many wrongdoings and the storage is full, as soon as the karmic obstacles are activated and transformed into one spirit, they will then undergo karmic retribution. When all the stored

explosives explode at once, this person will be “blown to bits”. This may be the time that a person is diagnosed with a terminal illness such as cancer, or is involved in a fatal car accident.

- Master Lu rarely sees a Totem that is very clean and bright. Everyone carries a lot of karmic obstacles. The main reason is that humans often have too many unwholesome thoughts, and desire to take advantage of others. They are reluctant to give, and do not know how to treat others well. Therefore, their body, speech, and mind are not pure. As a result, karmic obstacles from their past lives and the present life keep accumulating.
- It is very important to carry fewer karmic obstacles and to stay pure. The best way to eliminate karmic obstacles is to recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** and eliminate the dark energy stored in different areas of your body. That is, to reduce the quantity of “explosives” in the body. The more the explosives are reduced, the less likely you are to experience serious injuries, even if a small quantity of the remaining “explosives” is ignited in your later years.
- These days, the listeners of Master Lu’s radio programs are very wise. They ask him about the quantity of karmic obstacles that they carry and where they are located in the body. This allows them to eliminate karmic obstacles in one part of the body at a time.

Before you recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***, you can say, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and

bless me, <your full name>, help me to repent and eliminate karmic obstacles in <the part of the body>”.

Generally, for each part of the body, you can recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 3 times per day for 2 months, or 7 times per day for 1 month.

Certain parts of the body may have more karmic obstacles and require a longer period of time. If you simply say, “eliminate karmic obstacles in my body”, it would be very difficult to eliminate all of them, as there are too many all over the body.

- Many illnesses are possibly related to karmic obstacles, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, cerebral thrombosis, coronary heart disease, skin disease, epilepsy, Ménière’s disease, psychosis, and so forth.
- Back to your question, when you recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***, you may sometimes dream about someone asking you for sutras and mantras, or the part of the body in which you wish to eliminate karmic obstacles starts to ache – this is an indication that your karmic obstacles have been activated and transformed into spirits. You should recite 4 to 7 *Little Houses* as soon as possible. If you are still feeling unwell, you should continue to recite more *Little Houses* until you achieve full recovery. The karmic obstacles in this particular part of the body will then be almost completely eliminated. In your later years, you will be less likely to suffer from an illness in that part of your body.

However, if you leave it until you reach old age, then when the negative karma ripens, you may not be able to

completely recover even if you recite several dozen or over a hundred *Little Houses*.

- It is beneficial to allow karmic obstacles to be activated early and transformed into spirits. At this stage, these spirits would be less powerful and the number of *Little Houses* required will be fewer than when the karmic obstacles are activated later. This concept is similar to receiving treatment at an early stage of an illness.
- While reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***, it is best to kneel down and perform a full bow (with your forehead touching the floor) after reciting, “All the wrongs I have committed, I now repent (*Suo Zuo Zui Zhang, Jin Jie Chan Hui*)”.

For the rest of the sutra, when the text indicates that you should make prostrations, you can visualise yourself kneeling and performing the full bows in your mind, and nod your head instead.

You must recite the last line, “Namo Great Conduct Samantabhadra Bodhisattva (*Na Mo Da Xing Pu Xian Pu Sa*)”, 3 times before standing up. If you are reciting whilst kneeling, you should also recite this last line 3 times and then stand up.

- It is fine to perform recitations at a fast speed, provided that you do not miss any words.

24. Performing recitations vis-a-vis the law of cause and effect

Q: Master Lu, is it true that the law of cause and effect cannot

be changed?

Can we change the resulting outcome or retribution by reciting sutras and mantras? Also, is getting to know Master Lu also a part of the law of cause and effect?

A:

- Can we change the law of cause and effect? 70% of our fate is predestined, and the remaining 30% is subject to change. Then why is that some people find the readings of fortune tellers very accurate? It is because they cannot influence the 70% which is fixed, by changing the 30% of their fate that is not. Hence, their lives can only follow the path formed by the 70%.
- So, are we able to change the predestined 70% of our fate? We cannot change it through our own efforts alone. It is just like a child who sees a 7kg object but only has the strength to lift 3kg. How can he lift that 7kg object? We need to rely on the blessings and power of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to change this.
- You are the only person who can change your own karma—no one else can change it for you. Just like your own temperament—you are the only person who can bring about change.

25. Is the wish to go to heaven considered a desire?

Q: Master Lu, if we regard going to heaven as our ultimate goal, is this considered a desire?

A:

- Wishing to go to heaven is not considered a desire. Once you have attained a certain level of spiritual development, a desire will not constitute an element of greed. Desires can be good or bad. We are encouraged to have good desires and to eliminate bad desires such as craving for alcohol, lust, money, or getting your own way.
- As human beings, when we wish to go to heaven and live as heavenly beings, these wishes are not desires. They are simply wishes.
- Your wishes will elevate as your spiritual state rises.

26. Quantity of fruit required for making offerings

Q: Dear Master Lu, is there anything that we should take note of regarding the quantity of fruit that we offer to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas? Does it have to be an odd number?

A:

- The quantity of fruit offered to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas should be an odd number. Specifically, the amount for each layer of fruit should be an odd number, not the total amount of fruit.
- For example, if you offer 4 apples, place 3 apples on the bottom layer and 1 apple on the top layer, you will then have an odd number for each layer.
- It does not matter how many plates of fruit are offered.

27. Vegetarianism and the five pungent spices

Q: Master Lu, what should we be aware of as Buddhist vegetarians? Can we drink milk or take fish oil supplements?

A:

- There are five “non-vegetarian foods” within the vegetarian diet known as the five pungent spices, including onions, garlic, leeks, shallots, scallions (green onions) and chives. You should not consume them if you have adopted a vegetarian diet while practising Buddhism. These five pungent spices can be commonly found in many foods.
- The five pungent spices are considered stimulants as they affect our brain cells and trigger desires.
- The five pungent spices can also cause bad breath. It is best to avoid consuming products that contain them before reciting sutras and mantras, otherwise the merits and virtues of performing recitations will be reduced to almost nothing, and the effect will be greatly diminished. This then prevents Buddhist practitioners from accomplishing their spiritual practice. Consumption of the five pungent spices is also one of the reasons why some people do not experience positive results from performing recitations.
- If you have made a vow to have a fully vegetarian diet on certain days, you must not consume even traces of onion, garlic or any of the pungent spices on those days.
- If you have made a vow to adopt a fully vegetarian diet, you cannot take cod liver oil or fish oil.
- There are three “not strictly vegetarian” foods that can be

consumed by vegetarians: milk, cheese and eggs.

- Please also refer to **Q&A 115: Consuming vegetables in a non-vegetarian dish.**

28. Practising Buddhism and the goal of going to heaven

Q: Master Lu, as a Buddhist practitioner do we have an obligation to aim to go to heaven? Can we aim to be reborn as a human in the next life?

A:

- When a person cultivates and practises Buddhism with the aim of going to heaven or the higher realms, they have a broader perspective. Therefore, they will improve themselves in order to attain this higher spiritual state.
- If a person enjoys life as a human being and believes that it is alright to experience some suffering, and that it is also fine to be reborn as a human again in the next life, this person is in fact insensitive and has not awakened to the truth.
- First of all, we should aim to achieve a state of perfection and flawlessness. However, not everyone understands what the state of perfection entails, and therefore would not have the motivation to pursue it.

If you believe that being reborn as a human being is great, then consider an old lady in the remote countryside. Throughout her life, all she does is work on the farm, get married, raise her children, grow old and then pass away. She does not know the existence of heaven, and she is likely to be reborn into the human realm again in her next life.

- We must aim for higher goals in order to progress towards higher levels. This is similar to having a pleasant dream—You will still remember every wonderful detail of the dream long after you wake up. If you have not yet reached that state, you would not aim to go there. Only when you realise the benefit of going to heaven will you aim high.
- However, to go to heaven or the higher realms, you have to be a very good person. Many people wish to go to heaven, but they have not cultivated enough or performed enough good deeds in their lifetime to ascend to the higher realms. You need to cultivate and attain the necessary spiritual state to ascend to heaven or the higher realms.

29. Tai Sui Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva of the year

Q: Master Lu, I am praying to an image of Tai Sui Bodhisattva on the Buddhist altar in my home. During the course of following Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door, I realised that Tai Sui Bodhisattva changes every year. Should I invite this Tai Sui Bodhisattva to come down from the Buddhist altar?

A:

- “Tai Sui” is a sacred position in heaven, and there is a total of 60 Bodhisattvas on duty there on a rotational basis. In the human realm, there are endless natural and man-made disasters, and these Bodhisattvas are specifically appointed to protect us. There is a different Bodhisattva on duty every year. When we pray to Tai Sui Bodhisattva, we are praying to the Bodhisattva on duty in the current year. As we do not

know which Bodhisattva is on duty, we should not use the image or statue of any particular Bodhisattva as Tai Sui Bodhisattva.

- You can use a piece of yellow paper (A4 or A5 in size) and write “Tai Sui Bodhisattva” on it, or you can print these words from a computer (Chinese characters, either Traditional or Simplified text is acceptable). You can then frame this piece of paper and place it upright on the Buddhist altar, to the right of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. That is, when you are facing the statue or image of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, the image of Tai Sui Bodhisattva should be on your left-hand side.
- The first time that you pray to Tai Sui Bodhisattva, you can make offerings of water, fruit and oil (using an oil lamp). Then you can make an incense offering in front of the Buddhist altar and say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva bless me, <your full name>, with your compassion, please invite Tai Sui Bodhisattva into my home.” Finally, recite the holy name of Tai Sui Bodhisattva 108 times, and then recite the ***Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou*** 21 times.
- If, as in your case, you are praying to Tai Sui Bodhisattva with a particular image, not knowing if it is the current image or statue, you may invite the image of Tai Sui Bodhisattva to come down from the Buddhist altar. You can change it to a piece of paper with the words “Tai Sui Bodhisattva” printed on it and frame this piece of paper for praying. This way, you do not have to change it every year.

- Before inviting the image to come down from the altar, you should recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 21 times, the ***Great Compassion Mantra*** 7 times, and the ***Heart Sutra*** 7 times.
- Then you should say, “Thank you to Tai Sui Bodhisattva, for helping me, <your full name>, and my family in the past. Thank you, Tai Sui Bodhisattva! Thank you, Tai Sui Bodhisattva!” (You must not say, “I’m inviting Tai Sui Bodhisattva off the altar.”)
- Please also refer to **Q&A 97: Zodiac year of birth (or *Ben Ming Nian*)**.

30. Setting off firecrackers during Chinese New Year

Q: Master Lu, the Chinese New Year is approaching. What is the significance of setting off firecrackers during Chinese New Year (the Spring Festival)?

A:

- It is generally good to set off firecrackers in celebration of Chinese New Year.
- Firecrackers can drive away evil spirits and enhance positive *Yang* energy. They can therefore prevent unwholesome entities from entering the house.
- During Chinese New Year, setting off firecrackers before midnight on Chinese New Year’s Eve sees the old year out; setting off firecrackers a second time after 12am welcomes the New Year.

31. Paying respect to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on the first day of Chinese New Year

Q: Master Lu, I have a question. On the first day of the Chinese New Year, can I go to several temples to make incense offerings and make vows? These temples all have the statues or images of the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva. The vows I made at each temple are the same. According to our customs, we always go to several temples to pay our respect.

A:

- It is good to pay respect to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas at temples.
- It is good to pay respect at temples where Buddhas and Bodhisattvas visit, but it is not desirable for an individual to pay respect at temples where Buddhas and Bodhisattvas do not visit.
- It is best to go to the same temples regularly to pay your respect, and follow Guan Yin Bodhisattva's instructions to practise Buddhism diligently.
- Most importantly, you should perform recitations, make vows, perform life liberations, as well as cultivating your mind and practising Buddhism diligently in your daily life. Only then will Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless you.

32. Performing recitations and bringing forth one’s resolve

Q: Master Lu, countless people from around the world are now downloading recordings of your radio programs and learning Buddhism from them. All the feedback that I have received from people around me has been positive. However, recently I heard that some individuals are reciting the ***Cundi Dharani*** to break up other people’s marriages, or to kick their parents out of the house and send them off to nursing homes.

A:

- Buddhism emphasizes a person’s resolve. Only when you bring forth a resolve with kindness will you receive blessings from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- Master Lu teaches the sutras and mantras of the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Buddhism emphasizes the importance of being kind to others and helping sentient beings become spiritually awakened.
- You must never perform recitations with the intention of placing a curse on others or wishing them ill. This would be unacceptable to Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and the Dharma Protectors. If you are performing recitations with bad intentions in mind, you will receive punishment.

33. Hanging lanterns during Chinese New Year

Q: Dear Master Lu, Chinese New Year is approaching. Can we

light lanterns and hang them outside the main door for the whole night? Is this appropriate?

A:

- You should never hang lanterns, regardless of whether they use candles, light bulbs or otherwise (especially not with candles).
- Hanging objects (such as lanterns) usually causes trouble.

34. Skin Diseases

Q: Master Lu, some children are born with eczema. Is eczema a type of disease related to karmic obstacles? How should we perform recitations in such cases?

A:

- Generally, skin diseases, especially those that are congenital, are related to karmic obstacles. This type of disease is generally the result of major karmic obstacles due to wrongdoings committed by a person in their previous life or by their ancestors.
- It is recommended that you complete a large number of recitations of the **Great Compassion Mantra**, e.g. 21, 49 or more times per day. You can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless <full name> and cure <full name’s> skin disease.”
- You need to recite the **Heart Sutra** at least 7 times per day. You can also say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless <full name> and help <full name> to gain

wisdom.”

- In addition, you also need to recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** around 3 times per day. You can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless <full name>, help <full name> to repent and eliminate the karmic obstacles which have caused the skin disease.”
- If you have killed or eaten any freshly killed creatures, or someone in your family has created the karma of killing (animals), or if you as a mother have eaten a large quantity of freshly killed creatures during pregnancy, the resulting karmic obstacles could cause your children to experience skin problems.

You should recite the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** 21, 27 or 49 times per day for 3 months to help these minor spirits ascend to a higher spiritual realm. In addition, you must not eat freshly killed creatures or create the karma of killing again.

- You should recite at least 3 *Little Houses* per week and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <full name>”.
- At the same time, you should make vows and perform life liberations. You must make a vow not to eat any freshly killed creatures or create the karma of killing for the rest of your life.
- You can also apply the Great Compassion Water to the affected areas every day.

35. Regarding two people reciting a *Little House* together

Q: Master Lu, can two people recite one *Little House* together? For example, I recite the ***Great Compassion Mantra*** and the ***Heart Sutra***, whereas my husband recites the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** and the ***Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan***. Is this appropriate?

A:

- Two people can recite one *Little House* together. They can also recite any of the four types of sutras and mantras for the *Little House* together.
- Before you begin reciting the *Little House*, you should each write your full name down in the field labelled “Offered by” on the left-hand side of the *Little House*.
- As a result, both of you will accumulate merits and virtues
- However, it would be best to perform the recitations separately.

36. Will people with no religious faith be subject to “judgement”?

Q: Will people with no religious faith be subject to judgement at the end of their lives, as mentioned in established religions? If so, will they receive a standard form of judgement? If not, how is judgement meted out? Is it related to one's behaviour and temperament during one's lifetime? Is the mystical spirit world composed of many countries with boundaries similar to ours?

A:

- All people, including those who have no religious faith, are subject to judgement. They are judged in accordance with the karma they have created in the human realm.
- Based on their karmic effects, there are people who either ascend to heaven or descend to hell without being subject to judgement. Those who are extremely evil will descend to hell straight away; those who are extremely good will directly ascend to heaven.
- The spirit world consists of many countries with boundaries.
- Both the underworld and heaven have their own laws. There are no distinctions in the enforcement of laws due to differences in religious beliefs. People in the human realm do not have an adequate understanding of the laws of the underworld and heaven, giving them the misconception that people of different religions will be governed by different laws. Once they are in heaven or the underworld, people will realise that the laws in heaven or the underworld are similar to the laws in the human realm. It is just a conceptual matter.
- It does not matter whether someone has religious faith, they will naturally come under the governance of the laws of either the underworld or heaven, depending on which realm they are headed to upon death.
- If a person of who has no religious faith ends up in the underworld, they will be under the governance of the underworld. For example, if an individual of Chinese background dies in Australia, they will be under the governance of the underworld in the region of Australia.

- A person with religious faith, whether dead or alive, comes under the governance of their religion. They are also subject to the governance of the laws of heaven or the underworld.

37. How do you prevent your own energy from dissipating?

Q: What should I do if I feel that my energy is being lost or leaking out?

A:

- If you feel that your energy is leaking out, you should first identify when the leakage occurred.
- If it occurred at night and you did not lose your temper or get angry, it could be due to the following two reasons:
 - Someone is stealing your energy;
 - You are leaking energy. People who perform recitations have light and energy. If you do not control your energy properly you could experience leakage.
- As soon as you notice that your energy is leaking out:
 - You need to guard the acupuncture points on your body. Join your palms together (so that the ten fingers are together with your thumbs touching each other) and sit cross-legged to prevent your energy from leaking;
 - Males need to guard the “Dan Tian” acupuncture point (located about three finger widths below the navel);
 - Females need to guard the “Dan Zhong” acupuncture point (located midway between the breasts);
 - At the same time, you should recite the **Great**

Compassion Mantra continuously for approximately 5 minutes.

38. How do you know if your energy is being stolen?

Q: Master Lu, how can we tell if someone is stealing our energy? How do we know if our energy is leaking out? What does it feel like when there is energy leakage? What are the symptoms?

A:

- Generally, people do not notice if their energy is being stolen. If you could tell when your energy is leaking out, then it would be difficult for someone to steal your energy.
- Only those who have attained a certain spiritual state, have gained spiritual power, and have been practising Buddhism for a while will be able to tell if their energy is leaking out.
- The symptoms of someone stealing your energy or your energy leaking out may include:
 - Your body feels weak;
 - You have no strength in your arms and legs;
 - You feel dizzy;
 - You can noticeably feel that your energy is rushing out;
 - Your legs feel weak;
 - Your mind goes blank.
- If you experience several of the above symptoms, then it is certain that someone is stealing your energy, or that someone has placed a curse on you.

39. Placement and storage of sutra booklets

Q: Master Lu, what is the correct way to store sutra booklets? What should we do if sutra booklets have been stored inappropriately and have become mouldy due to exposure to moisture? Which mantra or sutra should we recite for our negligence? What should we do about the damaged sutra booklets? Thank you!

A:

- Strictly speaking, sutra booklets must not be stored in messy, untidy or unclean places. They must not be handled with unclean hands, left open face down, stored in a location that is lower than your navel, or placed on chairs, etc.
- For example, sutra booklets must not be placed in places that have an impure energy field such as the toilet/bathroom, etc. They must also not be left among miscellaneous, inappropriate books or novels (e.g. pornographic novels).

They are best stored horizontally, as some sutra booklets contain images of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas and may attract foreign spirits to them when stored vertically. If the sutra booklets contain only text and no images, there should be no issues with storing them vertically.

- If the sutra booklets have been exposed to moisture, then dry them in the sun if possible. If that is not possible, wrap them in red coloured materials (e.g. red fabric), and then put them aside for at least one year before disposal.
- After one year has passed, you should proceed by reciting

the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 7 times, then wrap the sutra booklets and take them to a temple or monastery.

- If the sutra booklets have been severely damaged, you should recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 21 times. If the sutra booklets became illegible long ago, then they are no longer considered to be sutra booklets. In that case, you can dispose of them at your own discretion.

40. Moving house

Q: Master Lu, I am moving soon. Is there anything I should do before I move into my new home?

A:

- It is best to move on a Saturday and ensure that there will be someone in your home the following day. Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays are also suitable.
- You should invite your friends to come to your new home and have a housewarming gathering to bring in positive energy. The livelier the better, the more the merrier.
- If you are a Buddhist, you can play the ***Great Compassion Mantra*** softly for 24 hours in your new home. The sound from the television or radio has the audio frequencies of human voices, which contain human energy. You can have them switched on whenever the house is vacant.
- At the same time, you can perform more recitations of the ***Great Compassion Mantra*** yourself.
- If you have a Buddhist altar in your home, you should first

invite the statues and images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to your new home.

In your old home, make an incense offering and wait until the incense has finished burning, then you can invite the statues and images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to come down from the Buddhist altar and wrap them carefully with red coloured materials (e.g. red paper or red fabric).

When you arrive at your new house, it is important that you place the statues and images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on the Buddhist altar first, and then make incense offerings with three incense sticks. Recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times and the **Heart Sutra** 7 times, make prostrations³, and say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva come to our new home, please continue to protect and bless me, <full name>, and my family. We will cultivate our minds diligently and sincerely.”

It is best to relocate your altar and set it up first before you move the rest of your belongings.

- When you relocate your altar to a new home, the statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas do not require another blessing ceremony. This is because Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have already visited the statues and images. When you move into a new home, you are just not making incense offerings temporarily. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are not present in the statues or images while you are moving. After you have moved into your new home, and as soon as

³ Kneel down at the altar and perform a full bow so that your forehead touches the floor.

you make incense offerings (known as a “continuation of making incense offerings”), Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will be invited to come and visit again. Therefore, these statues or images do not require another blessing ceremony.

- Once the Buddhist altar has been established, you should move the beds into place before moving the rest of the furniture.
- Prior to moving into your new home, you will need to recite and burn 21 *Little Houses* addressed to the karmic creditor of the house of <full name of the occupant>. The occupant of the house does not necessarily have to be the landlord appearing on the certificate of title (title deed).
- If you need to renovate before moving in, you will need to recite and burn 29 *Little Houses* addressed to the karmic creditor of the house of <full name of occupant>, prior to commencing the renovations. Once the renovations are complete, you will need to offer another 7 *Little Houses* (addressed to the same) before moving in.

41. What to do if you are unable to keep vows?

Q: Master Lu, if an individual is unable to keep their vows to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas? Will they be punished? Is there any way to solve this?

A:

- If an individual is unable to keep the vows they made to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, they are likely to be punished, but it is not always the case. Whether they will be punished

or not depends on their motives behind breaking those vows. Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Dharma Protectors have a certain level of understanding and forgiveness towards us.

- If you cannot keep your vows due to natural causes, then you will be forgiven to a certain degree.
- If you cannot keep your vows due to personal reasons or human factors, then it is most certain that you would be punished.
- If you know your punishment is coming, you must recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** to resolve it – there is no other way.
- You must kneel and repent in front of the statue/image of the Bodhisattva. Reflect upon your mistakes quietly, and pray to the Bodhisattva to resolve any forthcoming disasters.
- On the day that you fail to keep your vow (within 24 hours), you can complete more recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***. For example, recite 49 times that day.
- However, if 24 hours have already passed, do not recite ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** too many times. It is recommended that you recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** no more than 7 times per day, otherwise your karmic obstacles may be activated. Therefore, it is best to spread your recitation out by completing a regular number of recitations over several days.

You could also choose to temporarily stop your daily recitation of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***. Instead, recite it 7 times for the sole purpose of repenting your failure to keep your vow. You must continue these

recitations for one week in order to resolve impending disasters.

- At the same time, you should make a new vow, and recite the **Heart Sutra** 21 times per day.
- By doing so, you are reorienting and cleansing your mind. Through this method, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Dharma Protectors will forgive you for your wrongdoings. As a result, your major disasters would be turned into smaller ones, and the small ones would be completely eliminated.
- Be mindful and cautious when making vows. You should act in accordance with karmic conditions, and know your capabilities and limitations.
- If you fail a “Dream Test”, i.e. you have a dream in which you fail to keep your vow, this is also considered as an act of breaking your vow. Please refer to **Q&A 90: Having Dream Tests**.

42. Fruit and flower offerings to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

Q: Master Lu, when it comes to making offerings to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, what type of fruit or flowers should not be offered? Can we offer chrysanthemums, roses, or lilies?

A:

- First of all, a Buddhist practitioner should make offerings of fresh fruit or flower according to their individual circumstances.
- Ensure the flowers or fruits offered remain fresh. They should not be left on the Buddhist altar for longer than one

week. If the flowers or fruits on the Buddhist altar are not fresh, remove or replace them as soon as possible. Do not leave any wilted flowers or spoiled fruits on the Buddhist altar even if there are no immediate replacements.

Also, replace all the fruit on the offering plate. In other words, do not just remove the spoiled ones and leave the others on the plate.

- Offer only one type of fruit on each plate. Several types of fruit should not be mixed together on a single plate. However, different types of flowers can be offered together in one flower vase.
- Offer fresh fruits only. Dried fruits and preserved fruits are not recommended.
- It is best to offer fruits that are fragrant, such as apples, oranges, mangoes, pineapples, watermelons, etc.
- Fruits such as bananas and peaches are not suitable for offerings to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- It is good to offer lucky bamboo to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- Flowers such as chrysanthemums, lilies, orchids, daffodils, peonies, carnations, etc. can be offered to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Roses are not suitable for offerings due to their thorns.
- You can tell whether a flower is suitable for offerings or not by its Chinese name. For example, flowers such as peach blossoms or Japanese morning glories are not suitable offerings.
- Do not place potted plants with soil on Buddhist altars.
- In general, when offering lucky bamboo, place one vase on

each side of the altar. It is fine to offer one, two, or three stems of lucky bamboo in each vase, but not too many. There is no quantity requirement for the offering of fresh flowers.

43. Hunting and its impact on family members

Q: Dear Master Lu, my late grandfather was a hunter. Would his karma of killing animals affect me? How can I resolve it?

A:

- If your ancestors were hunters, the tremendous negative karma accumulated from killing other beings would be passed on to future generations. This is very difficult to resolve, and generally affects the next three generations.
- You must recite the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra***. Estimate how many years your grandfather (or other family members) had hunted for, and approximately how many animals would have been killed per week. Then calculate how many recitations of the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** you should complete for each animal that was killed. Based on this calculation, the sum of the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** recitations may be in the range of 10,000 to 20,000 times. You should always complete more recitations than the estimated sum.
- It is best to recite the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** during the daytime and on sunny days. Avoid reciting this mantra after 10pm or during extreme weather conditions, such as heavy rain, thunderstorms, and lightning.

Before reciting, you should say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help the spirits of the deceased animals, large or small, whose death my family members’ actions caused, ascend to a higher spiritual realm, and help me to eliminate karmic obstacles.”

- During the period that you are performing recitations, you should frequently drink the Great Compassion Water, which is blessed by Guan Yin Bodhisattva.
- This is known as repaying karmic debts. There is a saying that goes, “The son repays his father’s karmic debts, and the wife repays her husband’s karmic debts. If the karmic obstacles are not eliminated completely, then future generations will continue to repay the rest.” Therefore, you should also recite more of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** and *Little Houses*.
- In addition, you should vow to stop killing and eating any freshly killed creatures for the rest of your life. You also need to perform life liberations in large quantities.

44. Wife repaying husband’s karmic debts

Q: Dear Master Lu, you previously mentioned that “the son repays his father’s karmic debts and the wife repays her husband’s karmic debts”. If my ex-husband behaves indecently, am I still responsible for his karmic debts even though we are now divorced?

A:

- Husband and wife would not have become a couple had it not been for their predestined affinities. The wife is liable for her husband’s karmic debts, even if these karmic debts are due to his involvement in an extra-marital relationship with another woman.
- If you are divorced, ensure that you make a clean break. Your ex-husband’s karmic debts will no longer affect you only after a period of complete separation, usually three years.
- Within the first three years after divorce, you will still be affected by the karma your ex-husband has created. This is because the separation between the two parties is not only due to the law of cause and effect, but is also caused by negative karma created by both parties together. Therefore, both parties must bear the burden of their collective karma.
- If you recite sutras and mantras diligently, you will be able to repay karmic debts, eliminate your karmic obstacles, and completely resolve your karmic conflicts with your ex-husband. In doing so, you will no longer owe him anything and will not have to bear the burden of his karmic obstacles.

45. Effects of reciting the holy names of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas and recording them on yellow papers

Q: Master Lu, if elderly people are not capable of reciting sutras, can they just recite “*Namo Amitabha*” (*Na Mo A Mi Tuo Fo*) or “*Namo the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva*” (*Na Mo Da Ci Da Bei Guan Shi Yin Pu Sa*), and record these recitations of Buddha names on a piece of

yellow paper, then burn these yellow paper records at the end of their lives? Would this have the same effect as having someone perform the “end-of-life chanting” for them?

A:

- There is no effect if you just recite the holy names of Amitabha Buddha or Guan Yin Bodhisattva and record the recitations on a piece of yellow paper.
- It is best to recite the ***Amitabha Sutra***, or other sutras and mantras, and record these recitations for self-cultivation purposes, that is, to record them on a *Self-Cultivation Record Form*. A sample *Self-Cultivation Record Form* can be found in **Appendix E**.
- Burning *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* at the end of someone’s life has the same effect as inviting Amitabha Buddha to come and lead them to a higher spiritual realm. Based upon their virtues and their level of spiritual development throughout their lives, it will be determined whether they can go to heaven, and whether Bodhisattvas will come and lead them to a higher spiritual realm. Therefore, people with great virtue will smell the fragrance of sandalwood, see Bodhisattvas, and hear heavenly music on their deathbed.

46. Which sutras or mantras are helpful for finding a significant other?

Q: Master Lu, if we want to have a relationship or get married,

which sutras or mantras should we recite?

A:

- To pray for a relationship or marriage, in addition to your daily recitations, which should include the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times, the **Heart Sutra** 7 times, and the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 3 to 5 times, you should also recite the following sutras and mantras:
 - Recite the **Da Ji Xiang Tian Nü Zhou** 21 or 49 times per day. Before reciting, you should say, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to find a good relationship.” You can do more recitations of this mantra. Stay focused while reciting and avoid any distractions. It is best to visualise the image of the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva while reciting.
 - Recite the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots**. Before reciting, you should say, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to resolve the negative karmic affinity in my personal relationship (or marriage), and allow me to find a good partner.” You can recite this mantra 21 or 49 times per day.
- Along with reciting the sutras and mantras mentioned above, it will be more effective if you can make vows to Guan Yin Bodhisattva and perform life liberations.
- If you are destined to have a relationship, then Bodhisattvas will help you to find one. Otherwise, it is best not to insist upon what you are not meant to have. Even if you

eventually get what you asked for, the result may not be favourable.

- Once in a relationship, you should try your best to maintain it. It is best that you can encourage your partner to also believe in Buddhism, perform recitations and practise Buddhism together, and build a better shared future.

47. The number of candles and oil lamps on a Buddhist altar

Q: Dear Master Lu, how many candles and oil lamps should be placed on the Buddhist altar as offerings to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas? Also, can we offer electric lotus lamps or candle lights? Can we leave them on 24 hours a day?

A:

- If possible, the number of oil lamps should match the number of statues/images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on the Buddhist altar. If this is not possible, you may offer a pair of oil lamps or a single oil lamp for the entire altar.
- If you have one statue/image of Bodhisattva on the Buddhist altar, you can offer one oil lamp. Offering two oil lamps is fine as well.
- Practitioners following Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door usually pray to the following six Bodhisattvas: Guan Yin Bodhisattva, Nanjing Bodhisattva, Tai Sui Bodhisattva, Guan Di Bodhisattva, Zhou Tsang Bodhisattva and Guan Ping Bodhisattva. It is best to have 4 oil lamps (one for Guan Yin Bodhisattva, one for Nanjing Bodhisattva, one for Tai Sui Bodhisattva, and a common one for Guan Di Bodhisattva,

Zhou Tsang Bodhisattva and Guan Ping Bodhisattva. If possible, it would be best to have 6 oil lamps (Offer separate oil lamps for Zhou Tsang Bodhisattva and Guan Ping Bodhisattva). If this is not possible, then you should only put one or two oil lamps for the entire altar.

- If you have four or six oil lamps on the Buddhist altar, the order of lighting the oil lamps is as follows:
While facing the Buddhist altar, light the left oil lamp in the middle of the Buddhist altar first, then light the oil lamp on the left of the previous one, and then light the one located at the furthest left. Afterwards, light the right oil lamp in the middle of the Buddhist altar, then light the oil lamp on the right of the previous one and finally light the one located at the furthest right. The same order can also be used to put out the oil lamps.
- Candle offerings are generally not made. If you have already done so, it is best to offer a pair of red candles.
- You can put out the oil lamps after you finish making prostrations, or before the incense has finished burning. Avoid leaving oil lamps burning while there is no burning incense, as this tends to attract foreign spirits.
- You may use electric lotus lamps, provided that you are offering oil lamps at the same time. Note that they must not be left on all day (24 hours).
- In general, when you make incense offerings and perform prostrations, you can first turn on the electric lotus lamps and then light oil lamps. Before the incense has finished burning, you need to first put out the oil lamps, and then switch off the electric lotus lamps.

- When you extinguish oil lamps, you must never use your mouth to blow them out. You can use a lid, snuffer or other suitable instruments to put out the flame.
- Leaving electric lotus lamps on for an extended period of time without offering incense tends to attract foreign spirits.

48. Performing recitations and praying to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas during menstruation

Q: Master Lu, when females are menstruating, can they still perform their daily recitation, recite and burn *Little Houses*? Can they make incense offerings, and make prostrations to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas?

A:

- It is absolutely fine for females to perform daily recitation and recite *Little Houses* during menstruation.
- It is best to recite *Little Houses* during the daytime on sunny days. They should stop reciting as soon as they feel uncomfortable.
- After they have showered and cleaned themselves, they can offer incense, make prostrations to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and burn *Little Houses*.
- If not very clean, they can still offer incense and burn *Little Houses*, but it is best not to make prostrations to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

49. Having too many statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on the altar

Q: Master Lu, I would like to ask a question. The Buddhist altar in my home was set up by my mother-in-law. Originally, there was only a bronze statue of Guan Yin Bodhisattva placed at the centre of the altar. Later, as she did not come here often, I was the one who made incense and water offerings. After I started learning Buddhism, I placed several images of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva and the Buddha on the altar.

Now I am planning to keep just one picture of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva and one picture of Shakyamuni Buddha on the altar, and invite all the other images off the altar. How should I go about it?

A:

- If you have already made incense offerings to the statues or images of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, it is best that you continue praying to the statues. It is best not to invite them to come down from the altar, as it is very disrespectful.
- As a general rule, you should not casually invite statues or images of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas to come down from the altar. In your case, if you have too many images of the same Buddha or Bodhisattva, it is still recommended that you continue praying to them as usual. Do not casually make changes to your altar as it is very disrespectful. However, if you insist on inviting them to come down from

the altar, you need to recite at least 7 to 21 *Little Houses* for each statue or image. Address them to the “Karmic Creditor of the house of <full name of the occupant>”.

At the same time, for each statue or image, you should recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times, the **Heart Sutra** 7 times, and the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 7 times. Before reciting them, you should say: “Thank you XXX Buddha or Bodhisattva for helping me <your full name> and my family in the past. Thank you XXX Buddha or Bodhisattva. Thank you XXX Buddha or Bodhisattva”.

You must not say, “Please come down from the altar, XXX Buddha or Bodhisattva”. In addition, be mindful that after inviting the statues or images down from the altar, you will definitely have trouble.

- It is best to wrap these images in a piece of red fabric, and take them to a temple and give them to other people.
- Moreover, if you have dreams or simply realise that foreign spirits have entered the statues or images of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas on your altar, you need to recite 21 *Little Houses*, and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of the house of <your full name>”. Then you can continue to pray and make incense offerings.
- In the case of a statue or image of a Buddha or Bodhisattva being broken or damaged, you need to recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 49 times and 21 *Little Houses* addressed to the karmic creditor of the house of <your full name>. Then you need to replace the stature or image with a new one as soon as possible, and wrap the damaged one properly and bring it to a temple.

50. Helping compulsive gamblers return to the right path

Q: Master Lu, I would like to ask a question. My older brother is addicted to gambling. He gambles all day and does not work at all. When he is broke, he comes home and forces our parents to give him money. What should we do to direct him onto the right path? Master Lu, please show us the way out of this situation, and tell us specifically what we should do. Thank you.

A:

- For an individual who is addicted to gambling, it is best to start with reciting the ***Heart Sutra*** at least 7 times per day and give him some time to think things through. In fact, this is a transformation process. Even if he cannot figure himself out and continues to gamble, the Dharma Protectors would treat him in a gentle manner and hand out less severe punishment.

It is best if he can recite the sutra for himself. If he does not believe in Buddhism, then his family members should recite for him. They can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless <his full name>, grant him wisdom and help him completely give up the unwholesome habit of gambling.”

- If he does not listen to you, recite the ***Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan*** 21 to 49 times per day and say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva forgive <his full name>.” He is just like a child who has committed a wrongdoing and is now asking for

forgiveness.

- If he has completely fallen into addiction, recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 5 times per day. As he has already committed these wrongdoings, you need to say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless <his full name>, and help <his full name> to repent and eliminate the karmic obstacles caused by gambling.”
- At the same time, you can recite the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** and say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless <his full name>, help <his full name> to untie his karmic knots with gambling.”
- If you feel that foreign spirits have occupied him, you need to recite *Little Houses* and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <his full name>”. Otherwise, there is no need to recite *Little Houses*.
- People with a gambling addiction tend to attract foreign spirits easily. The money in gambling areas often has foreign spirits, regardless of whether it is money won or lost.

51. Hanging chilli peppers and bronze coins

Q: It is our family tradition to hang chilli peppers and bronze coins inside our house, would this affect the *Feng-shui* of the house?

A:

- Chilli peppers represent a form of “sharpness”. For a family

that does not experience much extraordinary success and tends to be ordinary, hanging chilli peppers represents happiness and celebration – similar to the effects of firecrackers.

- Chilli peppers also represent stimulation, which is associated with motivation or the feeling of moving upwards. They also represent happiness, celebration and progress.
- However, for people who recite sutras and mantras, hanging chilli peppers will not have any significant effects.
- Hanging bronze coins is not recommended. Money belongs to *Yin* energy (as opposed to *Yang* energy), and should not be left out in the open.
- In addition, the bronze coin is an ancient currency. If you hang bronze coins, you could potentially attract spirits from the past, lone spirits, or spirits that do not have a dwelling place.

52. Enhancing *Yang* energy in the home

Q: Master Lu, if our house lacks *Yang* energy, what should we do to increase it?

A:

- If there are only female members at home, and no males (generally referring to males between 12 and 60 years old), then your house may not have enough *Yang* energy, relatively speaking.
- How to increase the *Yang* energy in the house? First of all, it is very effective if you play the ***Great Compassionate***

Mantra whenever someone is home. You can use the version called the **Great Compassion Mantra** by Grand Choir (*Bai Ren He Chang Da Bei Zhou*). You can also play it softly in the evening. It is best not to play it when nobody is home.

- Secondly, you should allow more sunlight to enter the house during the daytime.
- Thirdly, you can leave the television or radio on for the whole day so that your house is always filled with sound. Sound waves can generate an energy field that will make your house feel warm.
- Finally, it is best to recite the **Great Compassionate Mantra** at home every day.

53. Ching Ming (Tomb-sweeping) Festival

Q: Dear Master Lu, the Ching Ming Festival (or Qingming Festival, Tomb-sweeping Day) is approaching and I plan to visit the cemetery. Can I burn *Little Houses* there? Which sutras or mantras should I recite while I am there? Also, is there anything else that I should be aware of? Thank you.

A:

- Festivals celebrated based on the lunar calendar, including the Ching Ming Festival, Zhong Yuan Festival (Ullambana Festival), and Dong Zhi Festival (Winter Solstice) are important times to pray to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, as well as tending graves and paying our respect to our ancestors. These are also crucial times for us to prevent foreign spirits from occupying our bodies, and to help them

ascend to a higher spiritual realm.

To pay respect to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the most important practices include offering incense, praying, making other offerings and performing recitations. As a general practice, it is best to prepare some *Little Houses* for these special occasions in advance.

- It we are to pay our respect to the deceased at home or at cemeteries, it is best to do so before 2pm.
- The cemetery is a place occupied by hundreds of thousands of spirits. It is best not to look around; make loud noises; make comments about other graves; burn spirit money, joss papers, joss houses, and other joss materials; offer steamed buns, fish, meat, cigarettes or alcohol; or over-react with sadness, etc.

It is recommended that you visit the cemetery during the daytime, and trim any weeds or unusual plants. You can offer water, fruit and flowers. Recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** quietly, and sincerely ask the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva to protect and bless you so that you can successfully pay your respect.

If your family members are burning joss papers and other joss materials for the deceased, you can recite the **Heart Sutra** for the family members at home, and say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless <full name of the family member>, grant him/her wisdom so that he/she would stop burning joss papers or other joss materials.”

- The most effective way to pay respect to ancestors is to

recite *Little Houses* and burn them under the sun. Generally, you can recite 1 to 4 *Little Houses* for each of your deceased family members.

The *Little Houses* can be burnt in front of the altar in your home as per usual. You can also burn them at the cemetery as long as it is during the daytime on a sunny day.

When you burn *Little Houses* at the cemetery, do not offer the “Heart Incense” to invite Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Instead, you should offer incense to the deceased and burn the *Little Houses* directly in front of the grave.

You can offer water, fruit, candles (do not light oil lamps. You may light red candles, but you do not have to) and incense in front of the grave. You can also recite sutras and mantras, and burn *Little Houses*.

You should use a new offering cup and a new incense burner solely for this occasion. Properly wrap them up afterwards and put them away for future use. You may bring home the plate for burning *Little Houses* and use it next time, or just discard it.

Meanwhile, you can recite the ***Great Compassion Mantra***. It is best not to recite the ***Heart Sutra*** while you are at the cemetery, though you may recite this sutra after offering incense at the grave of the deceased.

- At night, it is best not to think of deceased family members or friends. You can think of them during daytime.
- Spirits are usually very active right before and after the Ching Ming Festival. It is highly recommended that you leave the lights on at night, and leave them on for a longer period than usual. You can turn the lights on at an earlier hour and turn

them off at a later time. It is best to recite some sutras or mantras before you go to bed, and leave one light on for the entire night.

- Do not hang pictures of a deceased person on the wall, or place them in an upright position on a table. These photos can easily attract spirits which can cause problems at home, including arguments, illnesses, misfortune, etc. You can wrap these photos with red coloured fabric and lay them flat in a clean place.

You can pay respect to them on special occasions, such as the anniversary date of the deceased's passing, Ching Ming, Ullambana and Winter Solstice. Set up a clean and tidy table in front of the Buddhist altar where the statue or image of Guan Yin Bodhisattva is located. Place the photos of your deceased family members in an upright position. If you do not have any photos, you can write their names on a piece of yellow paper, and then place the paper in an up-right position to achieve the same result.

Once you have set up the table, you can make offerings of water, fruit and flowers; light oil lamps (no need to light candles if it is done at home), light incense, recite sutras and mantras and burn *Little Houses*. Once the ceremony is finished and the incense has finished burning, you can put everything away. Do not leave the photos or spirit tablets of the deceased out all day long.

- If you visit a cemetery in the countryside of China, the graves of many ancestors are usually placed together in one area. In fact, many of the ancestors may have already been reincarnated. Many others, such as ancestors from more

than three generations ago, may no longer be your ancestors. Therefore, you do not have to burn *Little Houses* for ancestors over three generations ago whose names you do not know or that you have not dreamt about.

It is also not recommended that you burn *Little Houses* for ancestors many generations ago altogether. You should burn *Little Houses* for those that were close to you or those you have dreamt about.

- Some people may feel that it is not visually appealing to burn only one *Little House* that will be gone in seconds, in comparison to those burning stacks after stacks of joss papers. According to Master Lu's most recent instructions, in order to obtain a sense of visual satisfaction, we can recite certain sutras and mantras, record them on several *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* and then burn those record forms for the deceased.
- You may recite and record the ***Great Compassion Mantra***, the ***Heart Sutra***, the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** and the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** for the purpose mentioned above.
- The *Little Houses* are in a standard format and should not be altered, while the *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* do not have a standard requirement. You can use a quarter of an A4 piece of paper for these *Self-Cultivation Record Forms*. There are no exact quantities required for such forms. Generally, reciting sutras or mantras 49, 79 and 108 times is most common. For the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***, it can be 7, 14 or 21 times etc.
- Here is an analogy. Offering *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* is

like giving a gift. The type and quantity of these forms that you want to give may vary at one’s discretion (A sample can be found in **Appendix E**). The *Little Houses* are like cheques, which must follow a standard format (A sample can be found in **Appendix A**).

- You may burn some small *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* for deceased family members on special occasions such as their death anniversaries, Ching Ming Festival, Ullambana Festival and Winter Solstice.
- Write the full name of the deceased on the left field (“Offer to”) and your full name on the right field (“Recited by devotee”) of the *Self-Cultivation Record Forms*.
- However, keep in mind that burning *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* only has the effect of a blessing. That is, it can only slightly increase one’s power and cannot help the deceased ascend to a higher spiritual realm. Only *Little Houses* can help the deceased attain liberation. Therefore, if a sense of visual satisfaction is not required, it is still best to recite *Little Houses*. It is more respectful and more effective.

54. Guan Yin Bodhisattva’s Birthday

Q: Dear Master Lu and the Secretariat: Guan Yin Bodhisattva’s birthday is approaching, as lay Buddhist practitioners, what should we do to commemorate the day? How should we do it? Thank you!

A:

- The Birthday, Enlightenment Day, and Renunciation Day of Guan Yin Bodhisattva are all very important dates. It is

recommended that you perform more recitations, make more vows, perform more life liberations, make more prostrations, and accumulate more merits and virtues on these dates.

- You can wake up earlier on these dates, take a shower and then offer incense. It would be best to recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 49 times, and the **Heart Sutra** 49 times. Your merits and virtues will then be perfected.
- If conditions allow, you may offer grand incense at home: After you light the oil lamps and make incense offerings at the Buddhist altar, you can then light a piece of sandalwood using an oil lamp on the altar. Sandalwood can be found at most Buddhist stores. After you extinguish the flame on the sandalwood, the smoke that comes out is considered grand incense, the fragrance of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Note that you must not extinguish the flame on the sandalwood by blowing with your mouth. You can perform the offering of grand incense three times, then say your prayers, make prostrations, and perform your recitations.
- If conditions do not allow you to offer the grand incense at home, you can offer extra incense instead. For example, if you normally offer one incense stick, then on these special occasions, you can choose to offer three incense sticks. You can also offer extra oil lamps, fruit and fresh flowers. Overall, the rationale behind the aforementioned practice is that you are putting in extra effort into making offerings that differ from your usual routine.
- Most importantly, be sincere when communicating with Guan Yin Bodhisattva. It would be best to pray for a safe and

peaceful life.

- In addition, avoid intimate acts on these days.

55. Reserving *Little Houses* for future use

Q: Dear Master Lu, I heard from your radio program that we can accumulate *Little Houses* for future use. How should we go about this?

A:

- *Little Houses* are very useful. They are one of the Three Golden Buddhist Practices given to us by the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva.
- If you are reserving *Little Houses* for future use, then before you start reciting the *Little House*, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva be my witness, I, <your full name>, now recite the scriptures contained in this *Little House* (the **Great Compassion Mantra**, the **Heart Sutra**, the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra**, and the **Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan**).”

If you are certain that these reserved *Little Houses* will be addressed only to your own karmic creditors, you may add “...and grant me good health” to the above prayer. Do not make this addition to your prayer if you are unsure about whether you want to address them to your own karmic creditors. For example, you may want to give these reserved *Little Houses* to those in need. If that is the case, you must not pray for anything in relation to yourself. You can only say

the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva be my witness, I, <your full name>, now recite the scriptures contained in this *Little House* (the **Great Compassion Mantra**, the **Heart Sutra**, the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra**, and the **Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan**).”

- Before you start performing recitations, you need to fill in the name of the reciter on the *Little House*. Note that the name must be filled in by the reciter himself/herself. The recipient field (under “Offer To”) and the date can be left blank. The **Great Compassion Mantra**, the **Heart Sutra**, the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra**, and the **Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan** that you recite can be recorded on the *Little House*.
- Generally, once you finish reciting the sutras and mantras for a *Little House*, you should record them as soon as possible (best within seven days) by filling in the red dots on the *Little House*.
- When the time comes for you to use the *Little Houses* that you have reserved, you can then address them accordingly. You can address them to your karmic creditor, or your deceased relatives, etc. Fill in the date on which you burn the *Little Houses*.
- This way, you can accumulate spare *Little Houses* for your own convenience. In case of an emergency, you can immediately burn them to solve the problem.
- It is best to preserve *Little Houses* that you have recited and filled in by wrapping them with red paper or red fabric. Red is a colour that has a protective effect, and can prevent foreign spirits from stealing the *Little Houses*.

56. Ways to handle road kill

Q: Master Lu, I accidentally killed a dog while I was driving today. At that time, I gave the owner \$100 in compensation, but I still feel very uneasy. Can you please advise me on what else I should do?

A:

- You feel uneasy because you are affected by your spirituality and conscience. As we cultivate our minds and change our behaviour, we are in fact cultivating our spirituality.
- If you have killed an animal (e.g. a dog) on the road, you should help its spirit ascend to a higher spiritual realm as soon as possible. You should treat the animal with the same kindness as you would towards a human being, otherwise you may face problems with your lower back or legs. Just giving money to the owner of the dog is not that effective.
- You should recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 7 times per day for seven days, and recite the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** many times: 108 times per day for seven days. Meanwhile, you should also recite 3 to 4 *Little Houses* and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”. Thinking about the dog before you recite the *Little Houses* would help.
- Large animals often have large spirits, and therefore we should not kill or eat them. If you have accidentally killed or harmed animals in the past, you need to sincerely repent and help the spirits ascend to a higher spiritual realm.
- If an animal has been killed on the road by other people, it is best not to touch its remains. It is not recommended that

you perform recitations and help its spirit ascend to a higher spiritual realm, as it might lead to unnecessary issues. However, if you have already considered it, then you must recite the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** for this particular animal.

57. Reciting and burning *Little Houses* at night and during bad weather

Q: Master Lu, many of us have the following question: We are not sure if we can recite or burn *Little Houses* at night, or on cloudy/rainy days?

A:

- First of all, recitation of the ***Heart Sutra*** and the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** can easily attract foreign spirits to come and take the generated power. It is best to recite the ***Heart Sutra*** and the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** during the daytime and on fine, sunny days.
- However, this does not apply to the ***Great Compassion Mantra*** or the ***Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan***. You can recite them day or night, on sunny, cloudy or rainy days, regardless of the weather.
- If the weather is pleasant at night, you can recite the ***Heart Sutra*** and the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** till 10pm.
- During the daytime, even if it's cloudy or rainy, you can recite the ***Heart Sutra*** and the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth***

Mantra. However, it is best to avoid reciting them during extreme weather conditions, such as extremely cloudy weather, heavy rain, lightning, thunderstorms, etc.

- During harsh weather conditions, such as thunder, you can only recite the **Great Compassion Mantra**.
- In addition, if you feel physically weak, and you experience discomfort after you recite the **Heart Sutra** and the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra** at night and on cloudy or rainy days, then it would be best for you to stop doing so.
- The best times for burning *Little Houses* are 6am, 8am and 10am in the morning, and 4pm in the afternoon. Any other time during the day would also be alright as long as the weather is fine.
- In special circumstances where you cannot avoid burning *Little Houses* on a cloudy or rainy day, e.g. if a karmic creditor urgently requires you to offer *Little Houses* or you (or the person you are reciting for) are suffering from a severe illness, etc., it would be best to burn the *Little Houses* at noon when *Yang* energy is at its peak.
- It would be best to avoid burning *Little Houses* at night.

58. Having cactus plants in the home

Q: Master Lu, can we have cactus plants in the home?

A:

- It is better to have gentle-looking plants in the home (i.e. the soft, non-prickly, spiky or thorny variety).
- Cactus plants are spiky and therefore the energy field they give out is relatively sharp and prickly. Plants represent the

personalities of their owners. If you have cactus plants in the home, over time you may be prone to losing your temper, becoming harsh or critical, or having an increased tendency to make barbed or cutting remarks.

- We should not have roses in the home for the same reason.

59. Displaying glassware and accessories in the home

Q: Master Lu, we have a lot of glassware which are shaped like trophies in our home. Some have pointed tops, some have flat tops, and some are cylindrical in shape. Would this affect our *Feng-shui*, or the health of family members living in the house?

A:

- Generally, glassware or similar decorations should not be taller than one metre. If they are taller than one metre then it is not so suitable for display.
- In particular, if the glassware has a pointed top, then it should not be too large in size.
- Glassware with the images of animals or human beings is not recommended, as they could easily attract foreign spirits.
- If the glassware makes you feel uncomfortable, then it is best to put them away.

60. Effects of reciting the *Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*

Q: Dear Master Lu, can the *Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots* be

used to resolve my karmic conflicts with several people at the same time? For example, before we recite the mantra, are we allowed to say, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva help me, <your full name>, to resolve the karmic conflicts between my father <full name>, my mother <full name> and me?”

A:

- Everyone has their own karmic conflicts and obstacles with other people. For example, parents have their own karmic conflicts and obstacles with each other, you and your mother or father also have respective karmic conflicts and obstacles. They are all different. Therefore, when you recite the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots***, you must say the prayers separately to resolve your karmic conflicts for each relationship. Reciting the mantra and praying to resolve several karmic conflicts at the same time will not be effective.
- Reciting the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** is an act of sincerely asking the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva to help us resolve our karmic conflicts with other people. Some of its functions include: clearing up misunderstandings in a relationship between couples, fostering harmony in marriage and family, resolving interpersonal conflicts at work, and eliminating karmic obstacles accumulated from previous lives.
- In general, the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** can be recited 21, 27, 49, or 108 times per day. It can be recited during the day or at night. Before reciting the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots***, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly

Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to resolve my negative karmic affinity with <the other party's full name> (it can be your relative, friend, or colleague's name)."

- The ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** can also be used to untie the karmic knots between <someone's full name> and imprisonment, between <someone's full name> and fishing, between <someone's full name> and drugs, or between <someone's full name> and gambling. It can be used to resolve the karmic conflicts of <someone's full name> within a relationship as well. However, you cannot simply recite the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** on its own without reciting other sutras or mantras. This mantra can only be used as a supplement, just like one of the many necessary ingredients in a medicine.
- The ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** requires the ***Heart Sutra*** as a foundation to be more effective. In general, if you recite the ***Heart Sutra*** 7 times per day as part of your daily recitation, then you can recite the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** for up to 49 times per day. If you need to recite this mantra more than 49 times per day, then you should increase your recitation of the ***Heart Sutra*** to at least 13 times per day.

61. Prayers before burning *Little Houses*

Q: Dear Master Lu, you mentioned on your radio program that while burning *Little Houses*, it is best not to say anything. Can

we recite the **Heart Sutra** or the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra** instead?

A:

- When you are burning *Little Houses*, your karmic creditors and beings in heaven and the underworld will usually be aware of the ritual that you are performing. It would be best that you do not recite any sutras or mantras or say anything additional, as many spirits will be present, and you need to be extremely cautious with your words.
- When the name of the recipient is stated on the *Little House*, other spirits cannot take the *Little House* away. However, reciting the **Heart Sutra** or **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra** while you are burning *Little Houses* can attract other spirits to come and take the power away from these extra sutras or mantras that you recite as they are not recorded on the *Little Houses* you are burning.
- Firstly, make incense offerings and bow. Say, “I express my sincere gratitude to the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva.” (repeat three times).
- Next, raise the *Little Houses* slightly above your head, and then place them on your Buddhist altar. Kneel and say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to give these <number> *Little Houses* to <name of the recipient> (which can be their Karmic Creditor, name of a deceased person, their aborted or miscarried child, or a Karmic Creditor of their house).”
- If you are burning *Little Houses* on behalf of someone else and the *Little Houses* were recited by him or her, you can say

the following prayer, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva help <name of the reciter> to give the *Little Houses* to <name of the recipient>.”

- However, if the *Little Houses* were recited by other people (in the event that you or your friend have asked others for help with recitation), you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva help <the name of the person who seeks help> to give the *Little Houses* to <name of the recipient>.”
- Before burning *Little Houses*, say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me with your compassion.” Then you light the *Little Houses* using the flame from an oil lamp on the altar, matches or a lighter. However, try as much as you can to avoid using the oil lamp. It is best to use matches or a lighter (Note: It is better to burn them from top to bottom, starting from the upper right-hand corner where it says “Offer To”). While you are burning *Little Houses*, simply say, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me with your compassion.” Do not recite or say anything further.
- After burning the *Little Houses*, say “I bow in gratitude to the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva for helping me give these *Little Houses* to <name of the recipient>. I express my sincere gratitude to the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva for protecting and blessing me.” (followed by

one prostration). You could also say corresponding prayers. For example, if you give *Little Houses* to your karmic creditor, you could pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to grant you good health, safety and good fortune. If you use *Little Houses* to resolve karmic conflicts with someone, you could pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to help you resolve the negative karmic affinity between you and that person.

- *Little Houses* must be burnt thoroughly, and there should not be any remaining pieces or edges left unburnt. Otherwise, the *Little Houses* may not be effective.
- If you do not have a Buddhist altar in your home, you can offer the “Heart Incense” first. Afterwards, recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** once and the **Heart Sutra** once, then say your prayer before burning the *Little Houses*.

62. Ways to call one’s soul back

Q: Dear Master Lu, I am currently in Shanghai. I have read many of your blog posts but none of them mention the method to call one’s soul back. Because I am very busy with my work, I am unable to listen to all of the recordings of your radio programs. Could you please tell me how to correctly call one’s soul back, and what else we should be aware of? Thank you very much.

A:

- If one’s soul is frequently not in one’s body, then they may need to call their soul back. Both children and adults may need to do this, especially children, as they can be easily frightened, become lethargic, disoriented and scared out of their wits. Typically, people whose souls are often absent

from their bodies display one or more of the following four symptoms:

1. They frequently stare into space and talk to themselves.
 2. They appear to be lost, confused, and suffer from poor memory;
 3. They lack focus and concentration, are easily distracted, and have no idea what they are doing.
 4. They are overly preoccupied with amusements or may have previously changed their name many times.
- The ritual of calling one’s soul back should be performed in front of the Buddhist altar in your home. If you do not have an altar in your home, then it is best not to perform it. Note that this ritual should be performed on a sunny day. If it is raining, then it is best not to do it.
 - The best time to perform the ritual is 8am. Also, it should only be performed in the morning. In front of the altar, light oil lamps, make incense offerings, make prostrations, and say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless my child, <full name>, and help him/her to have his/her soul return to the body, to have his/her soul return to the body.” Repeat this prayer 30 times.

The number of days this ritual needs to be performed varies across individuals, but it usually takes two weeks to one month.

- Each time after you have performed the ritual, you may recite the **Heart Sutra** 3 to 7 times for your child (or the person for whom you perform the ritual). Before the recitation, you can say the following prayer: “May the

Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless <full name>, and grant him/her wisdom.”

- If the ritual of calling one’s soul back does not appear to have any effect after two weeks to one month, you can recite the ***Guan Yin Ling Gan Zhen Yan*** 21 times prior to performing the ritual. Before you recite this mantra, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva perform miracles, protect and bless my child, <full name>, and have his/her soul return to the body.” This will enhance the power, and the merits and virtues. Perform the ritual after the prayer and recitation.
- In addition, you can also recite the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** 27 times. Before you recite this mantra, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless <full name>, and help him/her to resolve karmic conflicts.”
- It is best for a senior to perform this ritual for a younger person. To conduct this ritual, you must be pure and have a positive energy field, otherwise it can be very troublesome. In addition, when you perform this ritual for someone, you may bear the burden of some of their karmic obstacles. You can also call back your own soul, but you must ensure that your soul is whole and complete, and that you are not confused or in a daze. If your soul is incomplete, how can you be sure that it is “you” that is calling back your soul? Therefore, when you conduct this ritual for yourself, you should say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful

and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, and help me to have my soul return to my body, and be filled with wisdom.” You should repeat this prayer 30 times.

- When you are conducting this ritual for someone else, it is best to have this person present while you perform it. But it is also fine if they are not.
- Once a child reaches 12 years old, it is best not to call the child by any nicknames. If a person has 2 or 3 names in use at the same time, then there is a greater risk that the person’s individual soul will be separated from their body. It is best to have only one name in use.

63. Performing life liberations

Q: I have been following Master Lu’s Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door for over two months now and I have experienced countless positive effects. I have even tried to perform life liberations twice. The first time, I released a large turtle and prayed to the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva to bless and protect me. I then recited the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** several times before releasing it.

When I arrived home, I felt that I might have done something inappropriately. So I went online and searched for the ritual of performing life liberations, only to find that there are many versions. I picked one that seemed the most proper to me. Then I invited my family members to perform life liberation with me, but we spent a long time just doing the ritual and my family

members lost patience. I was going to invite them to perform life liberation on the 1st and 15th of every lunar month, but after that incident I do not dare to ask them again.

Since then, my plans for further life liberations have been put on hold. Without advice from Master Lu, I fear that I might have done it the wrong way. Hence, would Master Lu please advise us on how to perform life liberations correctly, so that beginners like us can follow it properly?

A:

- Performing life liberations encompasses all three types of giving: the giving of wealth, the giving of Dharma, and the giving of fearlessness. Hence, it can help us attain immeasurable merits and virtues. The greatest benefits that we can receive from performing life liberations are the elimination of disasters and extension of our lifespans.
- Those who particularly need to perform life liberations are: Buddhists, seniors and middle-aged people, elders with health problems, and people showing respect and care towards their parents, etc.

People in the following occupations should also perform life liberations frequently: kitchen staff, chefs, doctors who perform abortions, funeral and burial workers, pesticide and sanitation workers, slaughterhouse or abattoir workers/butchers, etc. to eliminate their acts of misconduct and negative karma. But it would be best to seek opportunities to change careers altogether.

- In regard to the time to perform life liberation: Any time throughout the year is suitable. For people who would like to pray for longevity, it is best to perform a life liberation on

their birthday. Other significant dates include Chinese New Year's Eve, when people bid farewell to the old and welcome the new, the 1st and 15th of each lunar month, and the Birthdays of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and so forth. Other suitable times to perform life liberations include the time when someone experiences their predestined calamities, such as prior to hospitalisation or a major operation, after being diagnosed with a severe illness, or after being involved in unfortunate incidents such as a car accident, etc.

To achieve the best results, it is best to choose a sunny day when *Yang* energy is at its peak. Avoid performing life liberations at night; however, cloudy or rainy days are fine during the daytime.

- It is best to release animals that are commonly consumed by humans, including fish, shrimp, prawns, crabs, clams, etc. Other animals that tend to be killed or eaten would also be suitable.
- You should recite sutras and mantras when you perform a life liberation. Performing a life liberation helps us to eliminate disasters and extend our lifespans; reciting mantras and sutras helps to protect us. For best results, it is suggested that you perform both together.

You can start reciting while on your way to the releasing site. It is best to recite the **Great Compassionate Mantra**. Before you recite, you should state your full name: "May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to eliminate disasters and extend my lifespan. I will continue accumulating more merits and virtues." Then you can recite

the **Great Compassion Mantra**, the more the better.

If you are performing life liberation on behalf of someone else, you can say, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless <full name>, help him/her to eliminate disasters and extend his/her lifespan.”

- Once you arrive at the releasing site, you can face the sky and say the following prayer three times, “I express my sincere gratitude to the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva”. Then you can recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** and **Heart Sutra** once each, and the **Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan** 7 times.

Just before you release the fish into the water, you can say the prayer once more, “<Full name> is releasing <number or total weight> of <fish, shrimp, or other creatures being released>. May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless <full name>, help <full name> to eliminate disasters and extend the lifespan of <full name>.” While you are releasing fish, you can also recite the **Great Compassion Mantra**, the **Heart Sutra**, and the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra** as many times as you like. The more the better. Be gentle when you release the fish into the water so that it will not cause them any harm.

- Before performing life liberations, it is advisable to make the following plea to the Bodhisattva: “If there is an issue of pollution in the course of performing life liberation and if the fish released are freshly hatched, I beg for forgiveness from the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin

Bodhisattva and Dharma Protectors.”

This is to prevent problems caused by the water quality or the unsuitability of species; for example, the water is polluted, the fish released are not fit to live in the area, or there are larger fish eating up small fish. If you are well aware that there are large-scale fishing activities in the area or that fresh water fish are not fit to be released into sea water or vice versa, you should take preventive measures in advance by looking for a suitable place for the life liberation. This is to ensure that the life liberation is successful and appropriate.

- If any of the creatures to be released die during the life liberation, you need to recite the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** to help the spirits of the deceased ascend to a higher spiritual realm. Generally, you need to recite 3 times for each shrimp or prawn, 7 times for each crab and 7 times for each fish that died.
- It is best to use your own money to purchase the creatures to be released. If you are releasing on behalf of your family members, it is best to use their money to make the purchase.
- If you are performing the life liberation on behalf of someone else, please refer to **Q&A 108: Performing life liberation on behalf of others** for further details.

64. Foreign spirits and karmic obstacles

Q: Dear Master Lu, on your radio program, you often talk about

foreign spirits and karmic obstacles. We understand the general idea about what they are, but would you please explain it in further detail, as this could be a very important concept. Thank you very much.

A:

- When a person steals, speaks badly of someone behind their back, kills a person, or commits any wrongdoings, dark energy formed by the unwholesome negative energy fields will arise in their consciousness. This dark energy will enter their body. The severity and scale of one's karmic obstacles will determine the areas where this dark energy dwells inside their body. Some will make this person undergo immediate retribution; some will remain as karmic obstacles in certain parts of the body. This dark energy is otherwise known as karmic obstacles; they have no consciousness. Until these karmic obstacles are activated, they will lie dormant inside the body and will not move or relocate to other parts of the body.
- When performing a Totem Reading for a person, Master Lu sees karmic obstacles as patches of dark energy. If a person has a lot of dark energy and the colour appears very dark and dense, then it means that this person has committed many acts of misconduct in their past life, in their present life, or both. The more dark energy one has, the more misfortune they will experience with their health, career and relationships.
- The best way to eliminate karmic obstacles is to recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 3-5 times per day, along with the recitation of *Little Houses*. Generally, you

need to recite 3 or more *Little Houses* per week.

- Foreign spirits are known as our karmic creditors, also known as “ghosts”. However, do not call them “ghosts”. Instead, it’s better to call them “foreign spirits” or “karmic creditors” to show our respect towards them. Foreign spirits could be our deceased relatives, friends, neighbours, etc. from our past or present lives. Foreign spirits have their own consciousness and are able to move around. Just like karmic obstacles, if a foreign spirit remains in a person’s body, then this person will suffer unfortunate experiences with their health, career, relationships, and their fortune, etc.
- While performing a Totem Reading, Master Lu often sees that foreign spirits have a shiny silver colour. These spirits include both scattered or incomplete spirits. We can tell that silver is the typical colour of spirits. Therefore, it is recommended that we avoid wearing silver clothes, that children avoid playing with silver toys, and that women avoid wearing silver or platinum accessories, as they tend to attract spirits.
- The best way to help the spirits ascend to a higher spiritual realm is by reciting *Little Houses*. For further details, please refer to **Q&A 4: How do we know if there are foreign spirits occupying our bodies?**
- Suppose explosives represent karmic obstacles. When a person has accumulated a large quantity of karmic obstacles in their body, it is similar to having a lot of explosives stored in their body. Once this person has committed many wrongdoings and the storage is full, as soon as the karmic obstacles are activated and transformed into one spirit, they

will then undergo karmic retribution. When all the stored explosives explode at once, this person will be “blown to pieces”. This may be the time that a person is diagnosed with a terminal illness such as cancer, or is involved in a fatal car accident.

- The relationship between foreign spirits and karmic obstacles is as follows: Foreign spirits are activated karmic obstacles, and karmic obstacles are foreign spirits that have not yet been activated.

65. Committing to a fixed number of daily recitations

Q: Dear Master Lu, due to personal time limitations, I am only able to complete my daily recitations six days a week. Can I skip one day and compensate for the recitations that I have missed on a later day?

A:

- Once you are committed to a fixed number of daily recitation, you must stick to it. Therefore, it may be preferable to set a lower number for your daily recitation of sutras and mantras. For example, if you have decided to recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times per day, then you must achieve this quantity every day. When you recite more than 7 times per day, the additional recitations are counted as extras.
- It is very important to set the number of recitations.
- Under special circumstances, if you think you might not be able to complete your daily recitation for the day, you can

tell Guan Yin Bodhisattva about your situation and perform your daily recitation in advance.

- If something comes up and you simply cannot complete your daily recitation in time for the day, you should also tell Guan Yin Bodhisattva by saying the following, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva forgive me, <your full name>, I am unable to finish my daily recitation today and I will finish it tomorrow.”
- No matter how busy you are, you should ensure that you at least recite some sutras and mantras every day. Even if you recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** only a few times, it would be better than not reciting at all.
- For the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance**, if you have missed reciting this sutra and need to make up for it at a later date, it is better to spread the number of recitations over several days, instead of reciting the total number in one sitting. You should not recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** more than 7 times in one day.

66. Performing recitations while driving

Q: Dear Master Lu, can I perform recitations while driving? I am a taxi driver and I have no time to perform recitations, can I recite while working?

A:

- There are advantages and disadvantages associated with reciting while driving.
- Reciting while you are driving is not recommended as you

may encounter trouble and attract foreign spirits. If we recite while driving at night, we may run over beings that we cannot see with our naked eyes.

- If you recite while driving, you may lose your concentration easily.
- When you drive, the tyres are pressed against the ground and are connected to the energy of the underworld. Therefore, the best effects occur when you recite on an airplane (after take-off).
- The advantage of reciting while driving is that the wind blows as your car moves, and the messages from your recitations are thus transmitted at a higher speed. This in turn generates a good energy field.
- When you drive a taxi, you will encounter many people in a small space; hence, it is not a suitable environment for performing recitations.
- If you have no other options and must work long hours as a taxi driver, and the only chance for you to recite is during work, then it is fine for you to do so.
- During the daytime, you can recite the **Heart Sutra** and the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra** while driving. However, avoid doing so at night.
- Night time is when spirits are most active, and the surrounding energy field is not desirable. Mind-wandering while driving tends to attract foreign spirits to occupy your body. Hence, it's best to just recite the **Great Compassion Mantra**.

67. Reciting *Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan* after praying to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

Q: Dear Master Lu, on your radio program you mentioned that after we pray to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and perform recitations, it would be best if we recite the ***Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan*** 3 times. Please tell us how to carry it out. Can we eliminate all our karmic obstacles in our present life by reciting the ***Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan***?

A:

- By reciting the ***Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan***, we can eliminate the karmic obstacles made in our present lives or those created recently, provided that those karmic obstacles are not severe ones. For severe karmic obstacles, we still need to recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***.
- Recitation of the ***Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan*** is very effective, but cannot completely replace the recitation of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***.
- If you have a Buddhist altar at home, after making an incense offering (in the morning and at night), perform recitations and make prostrations, you can recite the ***Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan*** 3 times and then stand up.
- If you do not have a Buddhist altar at home, you can recite the ***Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan*** 3 times after you offer the “Heart Incense”.
- Generally, you can recite the ***Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan*** 3 times after you have completed a portion of your daily recitation,

or after you have finished reciting *Little Houses*.

- It is not necessary to say any prayer before you complete the recitations of the ***Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan*** 3 times.
- Reciting the ***Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan*** 3 times will help us become purer; it also enhances the effectiveness of the recitations just performed. At the same time, it can eliminate minor karmic obstacles created on the day or during the week.

68. Things to be aware of after performing recitations

Q: Dear Master Lu, after our recitations, is there anything that we should be aware of? Are there any rituals we should follow?

A:

- After recitations, no rituals are required. Simply join your palms together and bow. Say the following softly or quietly, “My deep gratitude to the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva for protecting and blessing me, <your full name>.” This is a way of training our behaviour. It expresses our gratitude to the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva.
- It is best not to drink cold water, stand or sit against a wall, or start a conversation with someone immediately (within the first 5 to 10 minutes) after you pray to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas or perform recitations.
- After we pray or perform recitations, a type of wholesome energy enters our body and offsets the existent

unwholesome energy. This will heal our body, and help remove blockages in the pathways through which energy circulates. However, if we drink cold water right away, *Yin* energy will enter our body.

- People who like to have ice cold drinks are actually connecting themselves with *Yin* energy. When we wake up in the morning, it is a brand new day and everything starts afresh. It is the best time of the day, and if you have an ice cold drink, it is very likely that you will experience misfortune for the rest of the day, not to mention the effect on your blood's ability to clot. Generally speaking, it is fine if the drink is at room temperature and it does not feel too cold when you drink it.
- Walls also belong to *Yin* energy. The term "High Walls" often refers to prisons. In the past, prisoners were executed while standing against the wall. Therefore, after we pray or perform recitations, it is best not to stand or sit against a wall so as not to disrupt our positive energy field.
- After performing recitations, it is best not to start a conversation with someone immediately, as most of your positive energy from performing recitations would be lost. This is because speaking nonsense can cause the positive energy to disperse, rather than be concentrated in one place. Therefore, it is best to be at peace with yourself for a little while, and then gradually start conversations with people after a period of time.
- It is very important to be mindful of your speech and refrain from speaking inappropriately, including swearing, arguing, and fighting. Engaging in such activities for merely 5 to 10

minutes will deplete the positive energy accumulated through one or two hours of recitation.

69. Ability to see spirits

Q: Dear Master Lu, why am I able to see the spirits around me? Is there any method to stop me from seeing them?

A:

Generally, we are likely to see spirits under the following three conditions:

1. People with a lot of *Yin* energy are likely to see spirits. These people tend to be chronically ill or lack *Yang* energy. If you have too much *Yin* energy, then you should complete more recitations of the ***Great Compassion Mantra*** and try to get more sunlight.
2. People who go astray along the path of their spiritual practice are also likely to see spirits. Therefore, it is very important for us not to recite sutras and mantras, perform gestures, postures or rituals, or follow procedures that are not yet taught by Master Lu. For the practitioners of Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door, just focus on reciting the sutras and mantras included in the Guan Yin Citta, performing life liberation, and making vows. We must diligently cultivate our minds and change our behaviour.
3. If foreign spirits are occupying someone's body, then they are also likely to see spirits. For example, if you are driving a Toyota, then you are more likely to notice other Toyotas on the road.

In such a case, they should recite *Little Houses* and offer

them to their karmic creditor. To determine whether or not you need to recite *Little Houses* for your karmic creditor, you can refer to **Q&A 4: How do we know if there are foreign spirits occupying our bodies?** You can also make a judgement based on your current health condition and your dreams.

70. Foreign spirits occupying the body

Q: The well-respected Master Lu, now that we are reciting Buddhist sutras and mantras and cultivating our minds, we may have Buddha's light within us. Would this easily attract foreign spirits to occupy our bodies?

A:

- It is easier for foreign spirits to occupy the body of a person who does not perform recitations. If we perform recitations and cultivate our minds, foreign spirits can only occupy our bodies under certain conditions.
- It requires certain conditions and timing for foreign spirits to occupy our bodies.
 - These conditions are usually predestined from our past or present lives, or from events where we have shown disrespect to the spirits, or we have made inappropriate remarks and unintentionally offended the spirits (for example, saying something improper when we trip over).
 - When we perform recitations for our relatives and friends, it is possible for their foreign spirits to occupy

our bodies. When we recite for other people, we often take on certain responsibilities, especially if we are reciting *Little Houses* for them. One way to prevent their spirits from occupying our bodies is to include the following prayer before we recite *Little Houses*, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, I will recite <number of> *Little Houses* for <full name of your relative or friend>. May <Full name of your relative or friend>’s karmic creditor please ask <full name of your relative or friend> for the remaining *Little Houses*.”

- When we try to convince relatives, friends, or non-believers to learn Buddhism or to perform recitations, if we handle the situation inappropriately, this may also cause spirits to occupy our bodies. Therefore, Master Lu teaches us to spiritually awaken ourselves and others. Help those who have an affinity with Buddha. It is best not to have prolonged conversations about Buddhism with people who clearly do not believe in Buddhism and tend to generate karma of speech. Generally, when we introduce Buddhism to someone or try to convince someone to perform recitations, it is best to keep the conversation to no more than one hour. If it takes more than one hour, then that person’s spirits may occupy our bodies.
- People who perform recitations should avoid regular visits to cemeteries, funeral parlours and hospitals, or visiting severely ill patients. Cemeteries, funeral parlours and

hospitals are places where spirits are active; severely ill patients generally have powerful foreign spirits occupying their bodies. Those who perform recitations have Buddha’s light within them; this can easily attract foreign spirits to occupy their bodies. This is similar to the scenario where a wealthy person encounters a group of beggars and is then surrounded by them asking for money. However, this is only temporary; it will not be long-lasting.

- If you need to regularly visit cemeteries, funeral parlours and hospitals, or visit severely ill patients, then you should perform more recitations of the **Great Compassion Mantra** on a daily basis to enhance your spiritual power and accumulate more merits and virtues.

71. Introduction to Buddhist sutras and mantras (1)

Q: Dear Master Lu, I have been reciting the **Great Compassion Mantra**, the **Heart Sutra**, and the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots**. If I start to recite **Little Houses**, do I need to keep reciting these sutras and mantras? Also, what should we be aware of when performing recitations?

A:

- Daily recitation is the set of sutras and mantras that one must perform a certain number of recitations every day. For example, one may recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 3 times, the **Heart Sutra** 3 times, the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** once, and the **Cundi Dharani** 21 times. Performing daily recitation is just as important as our daily

food intake, and it is similar to earning an income to cover our daily expenses. Recitation of *Little Houses*, on the other hand, is like paying off your mortgage or other loans. The recitation of sutras and mantras for your daily recitation cannot be counted towards your *Little House* recitation. You also need to make separate prayers for your daily recitation and *Little Houses*. Likewise, the number of recitations of sutras and mantras for your daily recitation should be counted separately from that of *Little Houses*.

- The full title of each sutra and mantra should be recited in each repetition, especially the **Great Compassion Mantra** and the **Heart Sutra**. For example, before reciting the **Great Compassion Mantra**, you should recite its full title: *Qian Shou Qian Yan Wu Ai Da Bei Xin Tuo Luo Ni*; for the **Heart Sutra**, you should recite its full title: *Bo Ruo Bo Luo Mi Duo Xin Jing*.
- It is best to say the corresponding prayers or wishes before you begin your daily recitation. It is recommended that you make no more than three wishes, as making too many wishes would be an act of greed, thus affecting efficacy.
- The **Heart Sutra** and the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra** can be recited until 10pm during good weather conditions. If it is cloudy or rainy, you can recite them during the daytime. However, you should avoid reciting them during extreme weather conditions, such as dark gloomy days, heavy rain, thunderstorms, or lightning. In addition, if you feel weak or uncomfortable when reciting these sutras and mantras, then you should recite them during the daytime on a sunny day. Generally speaking, avoid

performing any recitations between 2am and 5am.

- If you are performing daily recitation on behalf of family members, friends or fellow Buddhist practitioners, their full names must be announced before you begin reciting in order for the recitation to be effective.

For your reference, brief descriptions of the benefits of some sutras and mantras are listed below, as well as the recommended corresponding prayers.

1. The **Great Compassion Mantra** (*Qian Shou Qian Yan Wu Ai Da Bei Xin Tuo Luo Ni*, or *Da Bei Zhou, Ta Pei Chou* for short) is one of the fundamental mantras for every Buddhist practitioner, and should be included in your daily recitation.

Some of its functions include: fulfilling all the wishes of each sentient being; curing illnesses; and receiving protection and blessings from Dharma Protectors. By reciting this mantra several times every day, you will be able to choose to be reborn into any Buddha Land by the end of your life.

For daily recitation: Generally, 3 or 7 times per day throughout one's whole life; can be recited during the day or at night. During critical times such as before and after an operation, this mantra should be recited 21 or 49 times per day, the more the better.

Prayer: Before reciting this mantra, you can say the following prayer: "May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me,

<your full name>, grant me good health, and strengthen my spiritual power.” If you are suffering from an illness you can also add the following, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva cure my illness in <part of your body>, and bless me with a speedy recovery.”

2. The **Heart Sutra** (*Bo Ruo Bo Luo Mi Duo Xin Jing*, or *Xin Jing*, *Hsin Ching* for short) is for establishing a connection with Guan Yin Bodhisattva, and obtaining wisdom through the compassion of Guan Yin Bodhisattva.

This sutra takes the form of power in heaven, currency in the underworld, and wisdom in the human realm.

Some of its functions include disciplining misbehaving children; influencing adults to have a religious belief e.g. Buddhism; making elders less stubborn; calming unstable moods and emotions; granting wisdom; and alleviating depression. It can also be used to help spirits in the underworld ascend to a higher spiritual realm.

For daily recitation: Generally, at least 3 or 7 times per day throughout one’s whole life. The **Heart Sutra** can be recited until 10pm during good weather conditions. If it is cloudy or rainy, avoid reciting it after sunset. You should also avoid reciting the sutra during extreme weather conditions, including heavy rain, thunderstorms, or lightning.

Prayer: Before reciting this sutra, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly

Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, grant me wisdom, calmness and a pure mind, and relieve me of afflictions (maintain focus while performing recitations).”

3. The ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** (*Li Fo Da Chan Hui Wen*) is an important scripture that allows us to repent before Buddhas. By reciting it, we sincerely ask Guan Yin Bodhisattva to help us repent and eliminate karmic obstacles accumulated from our past and present lives.

Some of its functions include repenting the karmic obstacles created in our past and present lives; seeking forgiveness from someone you have hurt in past relationships; resolving long-term karmic conflicts and karmic obstacles; and repenting inappropriate actions such as being disrespectful to Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, or damaging statues or images of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, etc.

For daily recitation: Generally, 1 to 7 times per day, throughout one’s whole life. Avoid reciting it from 10pm to 5am.

Prayer: Before reciting this text, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to repent and eliminate the karmic obstacles (in the body or a specific part of the body), grant me good health and wisdom. ”

Note: After reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***, if you feel soreness or discomfort in any part of your body, it means that the karmic obstacles have been activated and transformed into spirits. This is a good sign, as you can deal with the consequences now rather than later, and reduce the risk of their turning into a major illness later in life. Generally, you should recite 4 to 7 *Little Houses* or more until you feel better. Those suffering from severe pain or illnesses should recite additional *Little Houses* until recovery.

The above three sutras and mantras form the foundation of one's daily recitation. The following sutras and mantras can be recited, depending on your needs, to resolve specific issues. Generally, they should be recited 21, 27 or 49 times per day.

4. The ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** (*Wang Sheng Jing Tu Shen Zhou*, or *Wang Sheng Zhou* for short) is recited to pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to protect and bless us, grant us a peaceful and joyful life in this life, and allow us to be reborn into the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss in the future. It can also be recited to help those spirits of the animals that you may have killed in the past, including poultry, game, aquatic creatures, insects, etc. to ascend to a higher spiritual realm.

If you had eaten freshly killed creatures before becoming a Buddhist and reciting the Buddhist scriptures, or if you have inadvertently harmed animals, including killing or hurting animals in your dreams, you should recite this

mantra.

Recite as necessary: Generally, 21, 27 or 49 times per day. The ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** can be recited until 10pm during good weather conditions. If it is cloudy or rainy, it is recommended that you recite it during the daytime. Avoid reciting the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** after 10pm, or during extreme weather conditions, including heavy rain, thunderstorms, and lightning.

Prayer: Before reciting this mantra, you can say the following prayer: "May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help the spirits of the deceased, whose death my actions caused, ascend to a higher spiritual realm, and help me to eliminate karmic obstacles."

5. The ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots (Jie Jie Zhou)*** is to sincerely ask assistance from Guan Yin Bodhisattva to help us resolve interpersonal karmic conflicts.

Some of its functions include: clearing up misunderstandings in a relationship between couples, fostering harmony in marriage and family, resolving interpersonal conflicts at work, and eliminating karmic obstacles in previous lives.

Recite as necessary: Generally, 21, 27 or 49 times per day; can be recited during the daytime or at night.

Prayer: Before reciting this mantra, you can say the following prayer: "May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly

Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to resolve my negative karmic affinity with <the other party’s full name> (can be your relative, friend, or colleague’s name).”

72. Introduction to Buddhist sutras and mantras (2)

6. The *Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou* can be recited when encountering sudden or unexpected situations. It can also be used for resolving karmic conflicts from past lives. Some of its functions include resolving troubles such as lawsuits, financial loss, quarrels, fines and penalties, sudden illnesses, when you have foreseen impending disasters, or when you have nightmares.

Recite as necessary: Generally, 21, 27 or 49 times per day; can be recited during the daytime or at night.

Prayer: Before reciting this mantra, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to eliminate disasters, and bring me safety and good fortune.”

7. The *Cundi Dharani* (*Zhun Ti Shen Zhou*) is to sincerely ask assistance from Guan Yin Bodhisattva to help us fulfil wishes.

Some of its functions include praying for success in career; harmony in marriage and relationships; and academic

achievements. It is particularly helpful for young adults looking for a job, a partner in life or hoping to be successful academically. However, the wishes you make must be reasonable and legitimate.

For daily recitation: Generally, 21, 27 or 49 times per day; can be recited during the daytime or at night.

Prayer: Before reciting this mantra, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me have my wishes fulfilled and grant me success in career (or any other reasonable wishes you may have).”

8. The ***Da Ji Xiang Tian Nü Zhou*** can help you to eliminate poverty and all types of misfortune, to obtain prosperity, happiness, and good fortune in the near future, and to fulfil wishes for your marriage or relationship.

Recitation of the ***Da Ji Xiang Tian Nü Zhou*** is mainly to pray for good fortune on a specific issue. However, the prerequisite is that you must have accumulated sufficient merits and virtues in order to obtain good or great fortune. If you do not have enough merits and virtues as the foundation, then the recitation may not be as effective as expected.

Recite as necessary: Generally, 21, 27 or 49 times per day; can be recited during the daytime or at night.

Prayer: Before reciting this mantra, you can say the

following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, grant me good fortune and success in <specific issue>.”

This mantra can also be used for praying for a good relationship or marriage. You can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to find a good partner, and have a good relationship (or marriage).”

9. The ***Gong De Bao Shan Shen Zhou*** can help you accumulate positive karma, merits and virtues, and eliminate your acts of misconduct and negative karma. Recitation of this mantra can help you to transform your good deeds into merits and virtues. Merits and virtues can be used to eliminate karmic obstacles.

If you have performed many good deeds during a period of time, and you would like to pray for a specific issue, then you can recite the ***Gong De Bao Shan Shen Zhou***. For this mantra to be effective, the prerequisite is that you have performed numerous good deeds to serve as a foundation.

Recite as necessary: Generally, 21, 27 or 49 times per day; can be recited during the daytime or at night.

Prayer: Before reciting this mantra, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to transform the good deeds I

have done in the past into merits and virtues, grant me success in <specific issue>.”

In addition, you can recite this mantra for an unborn child or a child under 5 years old. Reciting the **Gong De Bao Shan Shen Zhou** helps to transform the child’s good deeds from previous lives into merits and virtues in the present life. They can be used to protect and bless this child, help them eliminate disasters, and ensure their safety.

Prayer: Before reciting this mantra for your child, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless, <full name of your child>, help him/her transform his/her good deeds from the past into merits and virtues, grant the child safety and good health.”

For an unborn child, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless the child of <your full name>, help him/her transform his/her good deeds from the past into merits and virtues, grant the child safety and good health.”

10. The **Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan** (or *Chi Fo Mieh Tsui Chen Yan*) can help you eliminate karmic obstacles, obtain safety and good fortune, achieve success in every aspect of your life, and benefit future generations.

Recitation of this mantra can help you eliminate relatively minor karmic obstacles that you have generated recently or during this life. For major karmic obstacles or serious

ones generated in past lives, you still need to recite *the Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*. Therefore, the recitation of the *Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan* cannot completely replace the recitation of the *Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*.

Recite as necessary: For relatively minor negative karma due to actions, speech or thoughts, you can recite this mantra 21, 27 or 49 times in one sitting.

Prayer: Before reciting the *Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan* you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to eliminate karmic obstacles.”

In addition, after having performed your daily recitation for a period of time, you can also recite this mantra 3 times to make yourself purer and cleaner. The minor karmic obstacles that you have generated recently, or on the day of recitation, can be eliminated at the same time. In this case, you do not need to say any prayers before reciting the *Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan*.

11. The *Sheng Wu Liang Shou Jue Ding Guang Ming Wang Tuo Luo Ni* can help you eliminate the possibility of having a short lifespan or experiencing sudden and unexpected death. It can also help to extend your lifespan, obtain good fortune and quickly realise Bodhi and attain Buddhahood. This mantra can be used to extend one’s lifespan: It can be used to pray for extending lifespan for elderly people, for

those who encounter major predestined calamities, and those who suffer from severe illnesses.

Recite as necessary: Generally, 21, 27 or 49 times per day; can be recited during the daytime or at night.

Prayer: Before reciting this mantra, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to eliminate disasters and extend my lifespan.”

12. The ***Ru Yi Bao Lun Wang Tuo Luo Ni*** can help you receive the blessing of Buddha’s light, obtain Buddha’s wisdom, extraordinary power and wondrous Dharma, and understand the teachings of Buddha. It can also help you transform your afflictions into Bodhi, be successful in every aspect, and attain safety and happiness.

Recitation of this mantra is mainly performed to pray for success in a specific issue. For example, praying for success in your career.

Recite as necessary: Generally, 21, 27 or 49 times per day; can be recited during the daytime or at night.

Prayer: Before reciting this mantra, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, grant me success in <specific issue>.”

13. The ***Guan Yin Ling Gan Zhen Yan*** can help you receive the blessing of Buddha’s light, be successful in every aspect of

your life, and obtain good fortune, safety and happiness. Generally, it can be recited to pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to bless you by performing miracles so that your wish will be fulfilled quickly. If afflicted by a sudden or severe illness, you can also recite this mantra to ease the pain.

For this mantra to be effective, the prerequisite is that you must have a pure and clean mind without any distracting thoughts, and sufficient merits and virtues to serve as a foundation. Otherwise, the recitation of this mantra may lead to undesired results. Recitation of this mantra should commence after Master Lu has performed a Totem Reading for you.

Recite as necessary: Generally, 21, 27 or 49 times per day; can be recited during the daytime or at night.

Prayer: Before reciting this mantra, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, grant me good health, or grant me success in <specific issue>. May Guan Yin Bodhisattva perform miracles.”

73. Having your fortune read by fortune-teller

Q: Dear Master Lu, during your public talk on 6 June 2010, you mentioned that it is not good to have our fortune told. However, most Chinese people have the experience of visiting a fortune teller at least once in their lives. Fortune-telling

indeed caused serious damage to my fate and fortune, and I learned it the hard way. What was meant to be mine ended up failing to come about after I visited the fortune teller.

In addition, Master Lu said that fortune tellers are often accurate about predicting misfortune, but not accurate about predicting fortunate events. If the predicted events have already happened, does it mean that they are already over or will they last for a while? Furthermore, if the fortune teller uses psychic abilities to make predictions, instead of relying on my birth data (which I did not provide), will this still be an issue? Lastly, now that I have my fortune told, is there anything I can do to remedy the situation?

A:

- Fortune telling is indeed very inappropriate. When you visit a (Chinese) fortune teller, you will need to write down the details of your birth date and time. This will make them known to beings in the spirit world. When the fortune teller gives the reading, the foundation of your fate will be changed. That will cause a negative impact on your destiny.
- In terms of the negative impact caused by fortune-telling, the issue is not about how long it will last. Rather, it has to do with the part of your fate that was predetermined in past life. If the fortune teller says that you will experience misfortune at the age of 25, and you then experience misfortune at 25, then the predictions about what would happen when you were 25 are accurate. If the fortune teller says that you will be wealthy at the age of 30, but you are still poor at 30, then the predictions are not accurate.
- Readings based on one's birth data or through psychic

abilities are both regarded as fortune-telling and not recommended. In particular, resorting to card readings (such as playing cards, etc.) amounts to playing with fire and putting your life at risk.

- If you have already had your fortune told in the past, refrain from doing so from now on.
- In the meantime, you can recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***. Before reciting this, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva forgive me, <your full name>, for being ignorant and having my fortune told in the past. I sincerely hope that it will not change my predestined path.” It is highly recommended that you recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 7 times in one sitting. For the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** to be active spiritually, it is best to recite it 7 times.

74. Performing recitations for family and friends on their deathbed

Q: Master Lu, as practitioners of Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door, what should we do when someone is approaching life’s end? Which sutras and mantras should we recite? After a person’s death, what is the proper ritual? How should we perform “end-of-life chanting”?

How long should we keep the body before the cremation? What should we prepare before and after the cremation? What should we do after it? What should we do within the 49 days after the death? Please kindly advise.

A:

- When approaching the end of one’s life, the most important thing for practitioners of Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door to do is to keep thinking of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. As Guan Yin Bodhisattva is one of the Three Saints of the Western Pure Land; the Bodhisattva can come and lead you to the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss if that is where you wish to go.
- As a person comes close to death, whether they are at home or in hospital, they must keep Guan Yin Bodhisattva in mind and perform recitations if they are able to. Their family members and friends may perform end-of-life chanting alongside them at this time, that is, recite the **Great Compassion Mantra**, the **Heart Sutra** and the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance**. These three sutras and mantras are the core of Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door. Once they are recited, Guan Yin Bodhisattva will certainly see, hear and know about it.
- At the same time, the person needs to think and pray as follows: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <the person’s full name>, allow me to transcend the cycle of rebirth within the six realms of existence, I want to be with Guan Yin Bodhisattva”. Meanwhile, their family members and relatives also need to pray as follows: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless him/her, <the person’s full name>, help him/her to transcend the cycle of rebirth within the six realms of existence, and ascend to the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss or the Four Sagely Realms”.

- As for which realm this person will be reborn into, it is mainly determined by how much karma they carry, and the sum of their blessings and virtues. A person with a good foundation for attaining Buddhahood and few karmic obstacles, with the assistance of “end-of-life chanting”, is likely to ascend to the Four Sagely Realms, including Sravaka (Hearer), Pratyekabuddha (Those enlightened to conditions), Bodhisattva, etc., or the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.
- People who pass away with a terminal illness normally have heavier karmic obstacles. Those people are more likely to be reborn into the Three Evil Paths (three lower realms). If no one helps them ascend to a higher spiritual realm by reciting Buddhist scriptures, it would be very difficult for them to even be reborn into the human realm. In such cases, reciting the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra (Wang Sheng Zhou)*** when they pass away should be able to help them be reborn into the human realm soon.
- During the final hours, it is best if family members can stay with the person. Within 8 hours after his or her passing, avoid touching or moving the body, and try not to cry. At this time, the family members should perform end-of-life chanting for the deceased softly, including the ***Great Compassion Mantra***, the ***Heart Sutra***, the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***, the ***Amitabha Sutra***, and reciting the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva or the name of Amitabha Buddha (i.e. “Namo the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva” or “Namo Amitabha Buddha”). Meanwhile, recite and burn as many *Little Houses* as possible.

- You may regularly accumulate recitations of the **Great Compassion Mantra**, the **Heart Sutra**, the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance**, **Cundi Dharani**, the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra**, **Gong De Bao Shan Shen Zhou** and **Amitabha Sutra** by using the *Self-Cultivation Record Forms*. Burning these *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* at the end of someone's life will make it easier for the deceased to ascend to a higher spiritual realm.
- While it is alright to use a Buddhist chanting player, it is best to perform the recitation by yourself.
- The family members can usually find out which realm the deceased will be reborn into by checking the temperature of various parts of the body. If the head is the last part to become cold, then the person would likely ascend to heaven. If the feet are the last to become cold, then the person would likely go into the underworld. If the naval area is the last part to become cold, then the person would likely be reborn into the animal realm. If the chest area is the last part to become cold, then the person would likely be reborn into the human realm.
- Within 49 days after the death, the spirit tablet or picture of the deceased can be placed on a separate altar for the family members to make offerings. After making daily offerings for the first seven days after the passing, you can invite the spirit tablet or picture off the altar, wrap and store it properly. On every 7th day thereafter until the 49th day (that is, the 7th, 14th, ..., 49th day), place the spirit tablet or picture on the altar (a different altar from the Buddhist one) again and make offerings. It is best to avoid putting the spirit tablet or

picture on the altar in the home continuously. Making continuous offerings will not only cause the house to have a lot of *Yin* energy, but also cause other spirits to visit the house if the deceased does not, making the house to be filled with *Yin* energy. Therefore, beyond 49 days after the passing of the deceased, it is recommended that the spirit tablet or picture be wrapped with red fabric and stored flat. Otherwise, other spirits may come and occupy the tablet or picture, causing unrest in your home.

On important occasions such as the anniversary date of the deceased's death (as per the lunar calendar), Ching Ming Festival (Tomb-sweeping Day), Zhong Yuan Festival (Ullambana Festival), Dong Zhi Festival (Winter Solstice), etc., you can place the picture of the deceased on a separate altar and make incense offerings. Burn some *Little Houses* for the deceased.

- Within 49 days after the death, it is recommended that the family members help the spirit of the deceased to ascend to a higher realm by offering at least 49 *Little Houses*, the more the better.

You can burn *Little Houses* as you finish reciting them. However, it would be better to burn them on the 7th, 14th, 21th, 28th, 35th, 42nd and 49th day after the passing. For best results, burn more than 49 *Little Houses* on these days, as these days are very significant and crucial for the deceased. By doing so, it's as though you are providing the deceased with power, helping the deceased overcome a barrier. This is much more effective than burning *Little Houses* on a regular basis or burning them all in one sitting.

- The family members can help the deceased accumulate more merits and virtues by using the deceased's money to perform life liberations or publish Buddhism-related books or DVDs. The family members can then pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to protect and bless <full name of the deceased> to eliminate karmic obstacles. This helps the deceased quickly eliminate their karmic obstacles, allowing them to ascend to a higher spiritual realm more easily. Many cannot ascend to a higher spiritual realm even though they have recited several *Little Houses*. This is because they have too much negative karma accumulated from their past lives.
- It is best to move out of any home previously shared with the deceased. If this is not feasible, it is better to redecorate or adjust the layout of the house. In addition, it would be best not to keep any possessions once used by the deceased and to dispose of them as soon as possible.
- It would be best not to talk about or think of the deceased too much after their death. If the deceased has ascended to heaven, it is easy for them to fall into lower realms if you miss them too much, talk about them too often, or burn joss paper and spirit money for them.

75. Ancestral tablets

Q: Master Lu, we would like to invite ancestral tablets and a general tablet for ancestors from past generations to come down from the altar. Please advise us on the correct procedure. Thank you.

A:

- For photos of the deceased hung on the wall: Prior to inviting a photo down from the wall, recite and burn 21 *Little Houses*. Address the *Little Houses* to <full name of the deceased>. Ensure the 21 *Little Houses* have been completely burnt before moving the photos.
- For ancestral tablets placed on an altar: Prior to inviting an ancestral tablet down from the altar, recite and burn 21 *Little Houses*. Address the *Little Houses* to <full name of the deceased>. Then recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times, the **Heart Sutra** 7 times, and the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 7 times. After completing the recitations, say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva kindly have my ancestor protect and bless me, <your full name>. I will place your tablet on the altar and make offerings on the anniversary date of your passing (or other important occasions such as Tomb-Sweeping Day, etc.)” If you do not say the above prayer: you will likely experience misfortune as a result.
- After you have invited the photo or the ancestral tablet of the deceased down from the altar, you can wrap it with red fabric and store it horizontally or flat in a clean and tidy place.
You can take them out to pay your respect and make offerings on important occasions, such as the anniversary date of the deceased’ death, Ching Ming Festival (Tomb-sweeping Day), Zhong Yuan Festival (Ullambana Festival), Dong Zhi Festival (Winter Solstice), etc.
- It is more complicated to invite a general tablet for ancestors

from past generations to come down from the altar. You need to recite at least 21 *Little Houses* before you proceed. Address them to “Ancestors of <your full name> in the present life”.

- Before you recite the *Little Houses*, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to give these *Little Houses* to my ancestors in the present life so that they may rest in peace or be reborn into a higher heavenly realm.”
- Then recite the ***Great Compassion Mantra*** 7 times, the ***Heart Sutra*** 7 times, and the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 7 times. Afterwards, say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva kindly have my ancestors over the past generations protect and bless me, <your full name>.” Then you can wrap the tablet with red fabric and store it horizontally in a clean and tidy place for 6 months to one year before disposing of it.

76. Burning *Little Houses* or an Application for Change of Name on behalf of others

Q: Dear Master Lu, my neighbour does not have a Buddhist altar with a statue or image of Guan Yin Bodhisattva in his home, but I do have one in my store. Can I let my neighbour come to my store and burn their *Little Houses*?

Another neighbour of mine also wants to do that. Alternatively,

can I burn their *Little Houses* or the *Application for Change of Name* (see **Appendix B**) on their behalf? Master Lu, please kindly advise. Many thanks!

A:

- Firstly, when you burn *Little Houses* or the *Application for Change of Name* on behalf of others, you will have to bear some form of burden. This is inevitable.
- In particular, when you burn the *Application for Change of Name* on behalf of someone else, your birth data may be lodged together with this person's application, and their karmic creditors might also occupy your body.
- Generally, parents can burn the *Application for Change of Name* on behalf of their children, or close relatives. Otherwise, it is best to burn your own *Application for Change of Name* yourself.
- If you have a Buddhist altar at your store or home, and you make incense offerings every morning and night, and make water offerings every day, then it is alright to let other people burn their *Little Houses* at your altar.

77. Transfer of merits and virtues

Q: Master Lu, as lay Buddhist practitioners, should we transfer merits and virtues when we recite Buddhist scriptures?

A:

- We perform daily recitation and recite *Little Houses* on a regular basis. Should we transfer the merits and virtues thus obtained? It is best to act in accordance with karmic conditions.

- Transferring merits and virtues is a major undertaking to practise giving. When you say that you are going to transfer merits and virtues to your karmic creditors from past lives or sentient beings who have affinity with the Buddha, that means you are going to transfer all the merits and virtues obtained from reciting sutras and mantras to all the beings across the heaven, earth and human realms to repay the four kinds of kindness above and ease the suffering of the three lower realms. This is a very powerful vow.
- It is a great vow; it embodies a great fearless spirit. However, it also requires sufficient merits and virtues. Only if you have accrued a tremendous amount of wholesome conditions, merits and virtues can your transference be fulfilled. If you have not yet accumulated enough merits and virtues but regularly recite the *Verse of Transference*, it is similar to donating merits and virtues beyond your capacity. For example, if you work very hard and only earn \$100, you can donate this money to help all the people in the world who are suffering from poverty. However, the amount of money that you can donate is too little, and the ghosts and spirits that you wish to save are too many. Not only are you not able to help them, but you would also end up with no money at all.
- As Buddhist practitioners, we should aim to awaken ourselves and others. If you have the ability, then you should help and save others. If you do not have enough power yet, then you should save yourself first before you save others.
- For practitioners of Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door, when we perform daily recitations and recite *Little Houses*, the prayer

we say before reciting sutras and mantras is in fact a form of transfer. It is a direct transfer: The merits and virtues will be directly transferred to the person for whom you recite. For example, if you recite for yourself, the merits and virtues will be directly transferred to yourself. It is simply a matter of a difference in transference methods.

All acts of kindness must converge. Master Lu teaches us that only after attaining the necessary spiritual state can we make the resolve to do a greater transfer of merits and virtues and awaken sentient beings universally.

78. Making and fulfilling Vows

Q: Dear Master Lu, can you please explain the difference between making vows and fulfilling vows? What should we do?

A:

- Performing recitations, making vows, performing life liberations are the Three Golden Buddhist Practices given by the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva. We must learn to use them well. Among these, the power of vows is very important for every Buddhist practitioner.
- Making vows involves saying your prayer quietly or softly before Guan Yin Bodhisattva, praying to the Bodhisattva for protection, blessings, or to perform miracles, to resolve your problems, confusions, disasters, misfortune, etc. In the meantime, you will do one or more of the following things:
 - Adopt a vegetarian diet on the 1st and 15th day of every lunar month for the rest of your life;

- Do not eat freshly killed seafood or other creatures for the rest of your life;
 - Do not perform acts of killing for the rest of your life;
 - Persistently perform good deeds every day;
 - Offer gold plating for statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas;
 - Introduce Buddhism to <number of> people within <a certain period of time>, helping them become spiritually awakened and be free from suffering;
 - Accumulate merits and virtues by performing meritorious deeds, such as making donations to print <number of> Buddhist scriptures or books, etc.
- In particular, the power of making the vow to help people become spiritually awakened by practising Buddhism is immense.
 - If you have made a vow to adopt a vegetarian diet on every 1st and 15th of the lunar month, but then forgotten later, or you cannot keep the vow due to special circumstances, you can inform Guan Yin Bodhisattva in advance, and practise vegetarianism on an earlier or later date. However, you can only do this once in a while; you must not make it a habit. Alternatively, when you make this vow, you do not have to specify that you will adopt a vegetarian diet on the 1st and 15th of the lunar month. Instead, you can say that you will do so for two days every month. This allows more flexibility.
 - Once you have made a vow, you must consistently keep your vow. If you cannot keep your vow simply due to personal reasons, then you will certainly receive punishment.
 - For those who have not practised Guan Yin Citta Dharma

Door, they should return to the same temple where they originally made their vows to fulfil them before the statues of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. They fulfil their vows by making incense offerings, making prostrations, making donations, and performing meritorious deeds.

If you have started practising Guan Yin Citta, that means you have taken refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and have been following Guan Yin Bodhisattva to cultivate your mind and practise Buddhism. No matter which temple you previously visited, or which Bodhisattvas you prayed to and made your vows, you can simply pray to the statue of Guan Yin Bodhisattva at home or at your Buddhist friend’s house (if you do not have a Buddhist altar) to fulfil your vows. You should kneel and make a full bow to Guan Yin Bodhisattva, express gratitude to the Bodhisattva and the temple at which you originally made your vow. Fulfil your vows simply by carrying out what you previously promised.

79. Zhong Yuan Festival (Ullambana Festival)

Q: Master Lu, the Ullambana Festival is approaching, what should we be aware of?

A:

- The Ullambana Festival is also known as the “Hungry Ghost Festival” and it is celebrated on the 15th day of the 7th lunar month. During the 7th lunar month, or similar occasions such as Ching Ming (Tomb Sweeping Day) and Winter Solstice, people tend to experience conflicts and unhappiness at

home, and family members are likely to become ill and get involved in arguments. Even the weather during this time tends to be not as good, with many cloudy and rainy days. This is because prior to the 7th lunar month, many spirits are released from the underworld to collect or repay their karmic debts in the human world. On the 15th day of the 7th lunar month, as with Ching Ming (Tomb Sweeping Day) and Winter Solstice, it is mandatory for the spirits to return to the underworld.

On the day of their return, we should respectfully bid farewell to our karmic creditors or deceased family members by reciting Buddhist sutras and mantras for them.

- During this period, if the spirits have not collected enough karmic debts or we do not respectfully bid farewell to the spirits, they will be unhappy or harbour hatred. After they return to the underworld, they can apply to return to the human world. This is the reason why some people constantly have karmic creditors.
- You should diligently perform recitations. It is recommended that you recite 2 *Little Houses* for each deceased family member. You can also recite several *Little Houses* and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”.
- On the 15th day of the 7th lunar month, even if the weather is not good, you could still burn *Little Houses* during the daytime.
- During the night (after dark), avoid reciting the **Heart Sutra** and the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra** components of your daily recitation. Provided you have filled in the “Offer to” field on the Little House, it would be alright to recite the

Heart Sutra and the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra** components of the Little House. However, if you experience discomfort while doing so, you should stop reciting.

- If you do not have enough time to recite *Little Houses*, you could recite the **Heart Sutra** 49 times for each foreign spirit.
- When you recite the **Heart Sutra** and you know the full name of the foreign spirit (for example, a deceased family member), you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <full name>, and help me to give the merits and virtues gained from reciting the **Heart Sutra** to <full name of the deceased family member>.”

If you do not know the name of the foreign spirit (i.e. your karmic creditor), you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <full name>, and help me to give the merits and virtues gained from reciting the **Heart Sutra** to the karmic creditor who is currently requesting recitations from me.”

- If you feel particularly sorry towards one of your deceased family members and feel greatly indebted to them, in addition to performing recitations, you can also make some donations. This is a way to contribute to your repayment of karmic debts, helping eliminate the calamities you currently face.
- On the 15th day of the 7th lunar month, you should perform more meritorious and virtuous deeds, and refrain from committing wrongdoings. You should remain mindful and respectful throughout this day, and not behave

inappropriately.

- It is best to repay your karmic debts by reciting Buddhist sutras and mantras, instead of burning joss papers or spirit money.
- In the past, during this special time of year, people in many Southeast Asian countries, as well as Japan, would stay in their homes and dedicate themselves to performing recitations, praying for peace and harmony for the year ahead.
- The 15th day of the 7th lunar month is also an important period of time to pray to Bodhisattvas and make offerings to ancestors and the deceased. You can offer the “First Incense” at midnight of that day.

If you have a Buddhist altar, you can offer the First Incense at midnight and perform recitations the whole night, including the *Heart Sutra*, the *Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra* and *Little Houses*. However, if you do not have an altar, avoid doing so.

It is also very important to make offerings to your ancestors and deceased family members during the daytime by visiting cemeteries or doing it at home. For more information, please refer to **Q&A 53: Ching Ming (Tomb-sweeping) Festival**.

80. Being destined to be a pure child

Q: Dear Master Lu, according to traditional Chinese folklore, those who are destined to be pure children usually experience extreme difficulties in life. What sutras and mantras should

they recite?

A:

- The idea of “pure children” or “pure boys and pure girls”, originated from the Chinese countryside in ancient times. There is a saying that they cannot get married. In fact, the reason they are not suitable for marriage is that they are reborn into the human realm from heaven. Some events or activities in the human realm are not suitable for them. Just like some people become sick as soon as they get married. They are very pure and have long lifespans. However, some will pass away at an early age if they get married.

- Another type of a pure child is bound to have a short lifespan. In general, they come to this world to repay their karmic debts to their parents. Once the debts are paid off, they will pass away.

There are also many pure boys or pure girls who are reborn into the human realm from the underworld. They are here to suffer short-term hardships in life. Once their suffering comes to an end, they will leave the human realm.

A few are also reborn into the human realm from heaven to fulfil their vows or to repay their karmic debts. Once they have completed their tasks or cleared their karmic debts in the human realm, they would either return to heaven or be reborn into a good family in the human realm.

- Pure children need to practise Buddhism diligently as well. Those who cultivate well and recite sutras and mantras diligently can also attain the state of perfect awakening. Most importantly, they need to persist with their daily recitation, including the **Great Compassion Mantra**, the

Heart Sutra, the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance**, the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots**, the **Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou**, and the **Sheng Wu Liang Shou Jue Ding Guang Ming Wang Tuo Luo Ni**, together with *Little Houses*. In addition, they should make vows and perform life liberations.

81. How to determine if an *Application for Change of Name* is successful?

Q: Master Lu, could you please kindly spend some time teaching us a good method to determine whether our *Application for Change of Name* is successful?

A:

- How to determine whether the *Application for Change of Name* is successful? Your instincts play an important role. First of all, it is mostly based on the feelings of the person who changes their names. Generally, we change our names to improve our conditions. After having lodged the *Application for Change of Name*, you should feel happier, as if you have opened up your heart and eased your mind. You should sense an immediate improvement in your mood and that your fortunes are already changing for the better. If you experience the above, then your application is successful. If, after lodging the application, you feel the same or even worse than before, or have bad feelings, then your application may not have been successful, or your new name

may not be suitable for you.

- Second, you should recite more of the **Heart Sutra**. People who complete more recitations of the **Heart Sutra** will grow in wisdom, and form a connection with their new names. When others call you by your new name, or during special occasions when your name is used, you will know that the new name is associated with you.
- Third, the success of lodging the application is also determined by the energy field. Is your new name used by someone else? If someone else is already using that name, and your energy field is very close to this person, then it would be very difficult for your new name to take effect.
- Fourth, it is essential for the *Application for Change of Name* to be active spiritually. For example, if you changed your name over ten years ago but have never lodged the *Application for Change of Name*, then this name should be active spiritually to some extent since you have been called by this name for over ten years. However, because you have not lodged the *Application for Change of Name*, this name has not been registered in the spirit world. Therefore, your individual souls tend to depart from your body. Once you have lodged the *Application for Change of Name*, you should be called by your new name in full as many times as possible. It usually takes three months or 100 days for the new name to be active spiritually.
- Finally, you can recite *Little Houses* to the “Karmic Creditor of <your new full name>”. After you recite and burn the *Little Houses*, observe if you are still suffering from headaches, bad temper, or nightmares. You can judge whether your

application has been successful based on the effects of the *Little Houses*. If the effects are positive, then it indicates that your *Application for Change of Name* has been successful.

- Once you have lodged your application, before reciting sutras and mantras each day, you can say your new name a few more times to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in front of the altar. This is very helpful in allowing your new name to take effect.
- Before lodging your application, you can begin by reading out the text on the application form. Then you can recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times and the **Heart Sutra** 7 times. As the final step, you can burn the application form.
- It is better to lodge the application on the 1st and 15th day of the lunar month, as these days are auspicious and favourable. The best times to lodge the application are 6am and 8am.
- If your application is unsuccessful, you can lodge it multiple times until it is successful.
- Generally, as soon as you have lodged your application, you can start using your new name to fill out your Little House. If you are unsure whether your application is successful for the time being, you can address your Little House to the “Karmic Creditor of <your new name> (<your old name>)”. This format can only be used temporarily as an interim solution, and should not be used in the long term.
- If your application is unsuccessful after your first attempt, but you have recited and burnt your *Little Houses* using your new name, these *Little Houses* will still be effective as soon as your application is successful in your later attempt.

82. Performing recitations for people with serious illnesses

Q: Dear Master Lu, I am very thankful that I get to know your Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door. I have a friend who suffers from cancer. How can I help him to save his life? Thank you very much.

A:

- First of all, the question is whether your friend has a religious belief or not. If he does, then there is a chance that he can be saved. If he does not yet have a religious belief, but is willing to believe now, then there is still a chance that he can be saved.
- Spirits that cause people to have cancer are usually very powerful. Generally, this happens when the time has come for them to undergo retribution; they still have a lot of karmic obstacles. People who pass away from a terminal illness (e.g. cancer, leukemia, etc.) usually pass away with an immense quantity of karmic obstacles and debts.
- Generally, when people suffer from terminal illnesses, their karmic obstacles have already broken out. At such times, it is best not to recite the **Great Compassionate Mantra** too much; the patients can recite it 21 times per day. They should do more recitations of the **Heart Sutra**, e.g. 49 times per day.
- Once their condition becomes stable, they can increase the recitations of the **Great Compassionate Mantra** to 49 times per day. They should continue to recite the **Heart Sutra** 49 times daily.

- During critical periods or before surgery, they should focus on reciting one sutra or mantra. In addition, they should keep reciting the **Great Compassionate Mantra** and say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <full name>, grant me good health and cure my illness in <part of body> soon.” It is important for people with cancer to persist with the recitation of the **Great Compassionate Mantra** for the rest of their lives.
- For people suffering from mental illnesses, avoid reciting the **Great Compassionate Mantra** too many times, usually fewer than 21 times per day. However, they should do more recitations of the **Heart Sutra**, usually 21 or 49 times per day.
- They should recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 3 to 5 times per day to repent of their karmic obstacles. According to the message conveyed to Master Lu by Guan Yin Bodhisattva, reciting the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** is very effective in curing cancer and acute diseases. The **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** can eliminate and even activate karmic obstacles. Hence, to ensure good results it must be combined with the recitation of *Little Houses*.

Generally, if the patient recites the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 3 to 5 times per day, they will need to give at least 3 to 5 *Little Houses* to their karmic creditors per week. Provided they can maintain the offering of a certain number of *Little Houses* each week, those suffering from serious illnesses can recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 5 times per day.

- If they or their ancestors have karma of killing (animals), they should recite the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** 27 or 49 times per day in order to help the spirits of the deceased, whose death their actions caused, ascend to a higher spiritual realm.
- The patient needs to recite and burn at least 3 *Little Houses* per week. However, it is better to recite as many as they can. It would be best to make a vow to state the number of *Little Houses* they will recite in a single batch. For example, they could vow to recite 21 or 49 *Little Houses* before a certain date. After finishing the batch, they can continue reciting *Little Houses* in similar batches until they have recovered. In addition, whenever they finish reciting 3 to 4 *Little Houses*, they should burn them as soon as possible. Do not wait until they have completed the full number of *Little Houses* pledged before burning them.
- If the patient has dreams about deceased family members or have previously had an abortion or miscarriage, they should help the deceased and the aborted or miscarried child ascend to a higher spiritual realm as soon as possible. Generally, they need to recite and burn at least 7 *Little Houses* for an aborted or miscarried child (Address them to “Child of <full name of the mother>”) or a deceased family member (Address them to <full name of the deceased>). It would be best if they could recite more than 21 *Little Houses*.
- Meanwhile, it is recommended that they make vows. The greater the vow, the greater the effectiveness, but they must keep their vow. For example: “If I recover, I will introduce Buddhism to <number of> people, helping them

become spiritually awakened,” or “If I recover, I will share my experience with others to demonstrate the benefits of practising Buddhism.”

If the patient thinks their abilities are limited, they can make such vows as: “For the rest of my life, I will adopt a vegetarian diet on the 1st and 15th day of the lunar month,” “For the rest of my life, I will not eat freshly killed seafood or other creatures,” “For the rest of my life, I will not perform the act of killing,” etc.

- At the same time, they should perform life liberations frequently, preferably in large quantities. For best results, they can perform life liberations on the 1st and 15th day of the lunar month. When they arrive at the releasing site, they can recite the **Great Compassionate Mantra**, the **Heart Sutra** and the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra**. There is no limit to the number of recitations that they can do, but the more the better. Before reciting those sutras and mantras, they should state their full name and say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <their full name>, grant me good health and cure my illness in <part of body>.”

If it is inconvenient for them to perform the life liberation themselves, they can ask their family members to do it on their behalf. For best results, they should use the patient's own money for life liberations.

- Performing recitations, making vows, and performing life liberations are the Three Golden Buddhist Practices that the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin

Bodhisattva bestows upon us to cure illnesses. We must learn to use them wisely and skilfully.

- Practising Buddhism and cultivating our minds can help resolve and eliminate karmic obstacles, and solve issues related to spirits. However, physical illnesses also need to be treated using modern medicine. This is because a lot of physical harm that is caused by spirit-related illnesses cannot be quickly alleviated simply by performing recitations. Therefore, to achieve good results, one should combine recitations with the use of appropriate medical treatments.

83. Burning joss papers and spirit money

Q: Master Lu, it is difficult to ask our family members to stop burning joss papers and spirit money. Not everyone within a family believes in Buddhism. Because of the influence of traditional Chinese customs, trying to prevent the non-believers from burning joss papers may affect the harmony in family relationships. They may say that it is their freedom to burn joss papers and that we should mind our own business. What should we do?

A:

- Generally, deceased family members who have ascended to heaven with the help of recitations tend to fall to the lower realms under the following three conditions:
 - Burning of joss papers, spirit money, or any joss materials belonging to the underworld, including paper

cars, paper houses, and clothing;

- Family and friends frequently miss the deceased person, or even cry when thinking about the deceased;
- Family and friends often talk about the deceased at night, such as discussing events that happened while this person was still alive.
- The *Little House* is a combination of four sutras and mantras. It is similar to an internationally recognised currency, and can be used in the spirit world. In the underworld, it is considered to be the largest denomination of currency. When the deceased receive Little Houses, they can use them as money, or use the power from them to ascend to a higher spiritual realm. If the deceased are already in heaven, then they can use the power from the Little Houses to ascend to an even higher level within the realm.

Joss papers and spirit money are for beings in the underworld, and cannot be received by beings in heaven. Even if you burn a lot of them, they are considered to be low-value coins in the underworld, and do not mean much to the deceased.
- If the deceased family members ascended to the *Asura* realm or heaven using the power from the *Little Houses* that we have recited and burnt for them, their foundation is not stable as they did not reach these higher realms through their own efforts. When they see spirit money being burnt for them, they tend to be greedy and come down to get the money. This is why they fall.

Once they fall to the lower realms, it will be difficult for them to return to the higher realms. They need power to ascend.

However, spirit money has no power. It can only be used in the underworld, and it is not worth much. If we want to help our deceased family members to return to the higher realms, the only way is to keep reciting *Little Houses*.

- Some people are concerned that the *Little Houses* they recite for the deceased will be wasted because their family members are burning spirit money for the deceased at the same time. Though they burn spirit money with good intentions, good intentions do not always lead to satisfactory results. For example, if a child does not behave, plays too much and is unproductive, their parents would try to help this child. But while the parents are trying to help the child, a group of lazy and unproductive friends may try to influence the child at the same time. That will not stop the parents from helping their child. The same principle applies here.
- Family members usually burn joss papers and spirit money on special occasions such as the Tomb Sweeping Festival (Ching Ming), the anniversary date of the deceased's passing, etc. However, we still need to save our deceased family members and help them to be liberated from the sea of suffering. Therefore, it is extremely important to persist and continue with the recitation of *Little Houses*. If we recite a sufficient number of *Little Houses* for our deceased family members, and they ascend to heaven as a result, then they generally will not fall to the lower realms.
- Once the deceased family members are in heaven, if they fall to the lower realms due to their desire to collect spirit money, it will be difficult for them to go back to heaven again

even if we continue to perform recitations. As an analogy, if someone is demoted, then it is difficult for this person to be promoted to their original position.

- We can explain the above to our family and friends, and try to convince them not to burn spirit money. If we cannot convince them or we encounter non-believers, we should be cautious and avoid saying anything inappropriate. Otherwise, it may lead to karma of speech. The best solution is to prepare a sufficient number of *Little Houses* and burn them while the spirit money is also being burnt.

If the deceased person is currently in heaven, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless <full name of the deceased person>, help him/her to proceed to a higher realm using the power from *Little Houses*, and not be greedy and become attached to the low-value currencies from the human realm.” If the deceased person is currently in the underworld, they would also be very happy to receive *Little Houses*.

- Only when we show care and respect towards our elders, and recite *Little Houses* for our deceased family members, will our children or grandchildren show care and respect towards us in our later years. This is the cycle of positive karma.

84. Making vows to recite a certain mantra or sutra

Q: Master Lu, may I ask you, before practising Guan Yin Citta

Dharma Door, I made a vow to Bodhisattva in front of the altar that I would recite a certain sutra 100 times for my parents and myself to eliminate our karmic obstacles. This sutra is not included in Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door. I recited that sutra several times, but then my friend introduced me to Master Lu's blog and Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door, which I found to be very suitable for me. Since then, I have been following your Buddhist practice and started reciting the *Little Houses* and performing daily recitation. I have experienced many positive results.

My question is: Since I have made the vow, should I continue reciting this sutra which is not included in the Guan Yin Citta? Can I recite *Little Houses* while I recite this sutra? Please kindly advise.

A:

- First of all, you need to determine whom you made the vow to, is it Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, foreign spirits or karmic creditors?
- If you have made a vow to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to recite a certain sutra or mantra a specific number of times, but now you practise Guan Yin Citta, perform daily recitations and recite *Little Houses*, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are aware of this.

For example, you originally planned to go to Beijing, and now you have decided to go to Shanghai instead. You do not need to go to Beijing first, and then go from Beijing to Shanghai. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are merciful and compassionate, and are aware of the practices we follow to learn Buddhism. The most important thing is that we sincerely cultivate our minds and change our behaviour.

- You do not need to specifically tell Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that you have decided to practise another Dharma Door (method), because they are aware of every proper Dharma Door. Furthermore, beings in the spirit world will be aware as well. If you have followed a proper Buddhist method in the past, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas from this method will be aware of it. Now that you have decided to follow another method, they would also understand and would not prevent you from continuing your cultivation.
- You can also tell Guan Yin Bodhisattva of your decision by saying the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>. I have started reciting *Little Houses* to repay my karmic debts. For the time being, I am postponing my recitation of <name of the other sutras and mantras> until a later time. When the conditions are satisfied, I will continue my practice.”
- This is not considered an act of breaking vows.
You are breaking your vow if you have vowed that you will never eat freshly killed seafood or other creatures, or that you will cultivate your mind and practise Buddhism, but you can no longer keep your vow. Generally, it is an act of breaking a vow when you give up on performing or practising a good deed or action.
- However, if you have vowed to spirits or karmic creditors to recite a certain sutra or mantra a specific number of times, then it is best for you to keep your vow.

85. Having tumours in the facial region

Q: My classmate's son has a tumour in his nose. Which sutra or mantra should he recite? What else should he do?

A:

- Having a facial tumour is a very severe type of karmic retribution.
- Our body parts can be divided according to their *Yin* and *Yang*. The parts that we cover up with clothes are considered to be *Yin*, and the parts that can be exposed are considered to be *Yang*. The parts that can be either covered up or exposed are partially *Yin* and partially *Yang*.
- The face belongs to the *Yang* part. If you have a tumour that grows in the part of the body that is *Yang* where others can see it at first glance, it is considered an immediate karmic retribution. In ancient times, prisoners were given tattoos on their faces to show everyone that they had committed crimes. This is a major form of karmic retribution.
- Therefore, if you have a facial tumour, and you realise that it is your karmic retribution, then you should believe in Buddhism and perform recitations. You should recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** along with *Little Houses* very diligently. Meanwhile, you should also perform life liberations and make vows.

86. Propagating several Dharma Doors at the same time

Q: I am now practising Master Jun Hong Lu's Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door. I perform daily recitations, recite *Little Houses*, and have experienced many positive results.

My question is: Can I continue to practise multiple Dharma Doors (methods) at the same time? Or can I post Master Lu's teachings on my blog, along with teachings from other Dharma Doors? Would this be considered appropriate?

A:

- It is said that there are 84,000 Dharma Doors and we can practise any of them. Master Lu often advises that when we practise Buddhism, we should learn according to the Dharma. This means you need to understand the Dharma Door you choose, and find out which one can solve your problems. This is similar to finding a suitable doctor for your ailment.
- When you begin to practise a certain Dharma Door and propagate it, you will receive a lot of merits and virtues from this Dharma Door. At the same time, they will help you to eliminate acts of misconduct and karmic obstacles.
- If you are practising or propagating a different Dharma Door at the same time, this in fact causes an outflow of your merits and virtues. As an analogy, suppose you own a store, and it has been generating good profits. The accumulation of merits and virtues can be likened to the accumulation of profits. Now, while you operate this store, you decide to open another one. Everything is fine if the new store

generates profits. But if it makes no money, then you will have to transfer some profits from the original store to support the new one.

- Therefore, if you practise or promote two Dharma Doors at the same time, outflows tend to occur. You have already gained merits and virtues from practising the original method, but you choose to promote another one. If this method is not suitable for you, your energy field, spiritual power and your practice of the original method will be affected.
- Following multiple Dharma Doors is similar to learning many things at the same time. You will not be able to master any of them because you are spreading yourself too thin. Therefore, you should focus on just one Dharma Door. If you have already found a suitable Dharma Door, it is best to stick with it rather than to seek another.

Generally speaking, a successful practitioner is one who dedicates themselves to only one Dharma Door. Similarly, an athlete specializing in high jump will always be better at high jump than swimming, whereas a good swimmer would not be as good at high jump. The key to becoming an expert, a professional, or a specialist, is to “focus”. The same principle applies to learning Buddhism. To become an all-round gold medallist, one must apply tremendous effort, yet the success rate tends to be very low.

- If you have not yet decided which Dharma Door to follow, it is fine to find out more about different Dharma Doors. However, if you have already decided to follow a particular Dharma Door, then it is best not to read about or propagate

information from other Dharma Doors. For example, if you have already decided to major in finance at university, it is better to focus your studies on finance and not get side-tracked by too many non-finance courses. Otherwise, you may not be able to graduate with any major in the end.

- We, as humans, have a limited capacity of wisdom. Hence, the more Dharma Doors we practise, the more confusion there will be. For example, when you are critically ill, a lack of clarity and focus may lead you to consult a new doctor every time you hear of one recommended for your illness. Following the directions of several doctors at once will likely frustrate your overall recovery or cause unnecessary complications. This could ultimately cause you to lose valuable time, which could end up costing you your life. Your chances of recovery would increase if you diligently follow one suitable form of treatment for your condition. Therefore, it is extremely important to choose one Dharma Door that suits you.

87. Making Oil offerings

Q: We want to offer oil to the Bodhisattvas at the Guan Yin Citta Centre. Should we place a bottle of oil in front of the statues or images of the Bodhisattvas on the altar, or should we light an oil lamp? Thank you.

A:

- Making offerings of vegetable oil to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will result in blessings of improved eyesight, hearing and wisdom.

- Generally, vegetable oils such as olive oil, canola seed oil, corn oil, and lotus oil can be used for oil offerings.
- Sesame oil, peanut oil, or any oil with an aroma should not be used for oil lamps, as oils with an aroma are considered impure. Their strong aroma would overpower the scent of the sandalwood incense; they are not suitable for offerings to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Soybean oil is too concentrated to burn easily; it is thus also unsuitable for oil offerings.
- After removing the packaging and the label, you can offer the entire bottle of oil before the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on the altar. This would be considered an oil offering, too.
- However, the best way of making oil offerings is to light oil lamps and refill the oil lamps with the oil that you wish to offer. You should refill the oil lamps frequently by adding a small amount of fresh oil every day, just as you would with offerings of fresh flowers, fruit and water.
- Ensure that the oil that has been offered to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas must not be used to cook non-vegetarian dishes, otherwise that will lead to negative karma. We can consume the fruits and water after offering them to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas directly. But for the oil that we offered, it has to be cooked before consumption. For example, you may use the offered oil to cook vegetarian dishes.
- When you make oil offerings in a public place, for example, at the Guan Yin Citta Centre, you can bring your own bottle of oil to fill up the oil lamps on the altar. Afterwards, you can take the bottle home and use the remaining oil for vegetarian cooking.

88. Praying to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for a child

Q: Master Lu, which sutras and mantras should I recite to conceive a child?

A:

- When a person desires a child but is unable to conceive, it is one of the Eight Sufferings in life, i.e. the suffering of not being able to obtain what one desires. Generally, the inability to conceive is caused by various karmic conditions and effects. It could be due to negative karma created in past lives, failure to do meritorious deeds on the part of their ancestors, or other reasons. These are usually major karmic obstacles. Therefore, different combinations of sutras and mantras should be applied to each individual accordingly.
- To pray for a child, you should recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7, 11, 21 or 49 times per day, the more the better. Generally, when you encounter major obstacles in life, suffer from a serious illness, or experience major predestined calamities, you should recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** at least 49 times per day. Before reciting, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, grant me good health, help me to resolve my gynaecological issues and allow me to conceive and give birth soon.”
- You should recite the **Heart Sutra** 7 or 11 times per day, with the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me,

<your full name>, grant me wisdom and help me to eliminate afflictions.” This should be included in your daily recitations. Reciting the **Heart Sutra** allows you to gain wisdom and inner peace. It helps you to broaden your perspective in order to solve problems.

- You should recite the **Cundi Dharani** 21, 49 or 108 times per day with the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, grant me good health, and allow me to conceive and give birth soon.”
- You should recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 5 times per day. This is a very important Buddhist text. The inability to conceive is caused by major karmic obstacles, therefore it is best to recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 5 times per day to repent. If you cannot recite it 5 times daily, then you can start with 3 times per day, and then increase gradually. You can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to eliminate karmic obstacles, and the gynaecological karmic obstacles, grant me good health and the ability to conceive and give birth soon.” If you are already aware of the issues with your uterus or ovaries, you can specifically state the issues in your prayer. For example, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to eliminate karmic obstacles in <a specific part of the body>, grant me good health and the ability to conceive and give birth soon.”

- Once you begin reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***, you should also start reciting *Little Houses*. Although reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** can help you eliminate karmic obstacles, it may activate your karmic obstacles at the same time, transforming them into spirits. Hence, it is highly recommended that you start reciting *Little Houses* right away. Reciting *Little Houses* can help the spirit occupying your body to ascend to a higher spiritual realm; your problem can then be resolved. If you do not recite enough *Little Houses* in time, your condition may worsen.
- If you have ever had a miscarriage or abortion in the past, you will need to recite a minimum of 7 to 21 *Little Houses* for each child. You should address the *Little Houses* to “Child of <your full name>.” Please refer to **Q&A 112: Naming aborted or miscarried babies and setting up spirit tablets for them.**
- If you have committed or contributed to killing animals for work purposes, this creates major karma of killing. Therefore, you should change your job. Also, you will need to recite the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** and say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help the spirits of the deceased, whose death that my action caused, ascend to a higher spiritual realm.”
- At the same time, you should make great vows. You can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me,

<your full name>, I vow that I will never eat freshly killed seafood or other creatures for the rest of my life.” Other vows you can consider include: Introducing Buddhism to <number of> people within <a certain period of time>, and helping them become spiritually awakened and be free from suffering; Adopting a vegetarian diet for <number of> days per month, etc. The greater the vow, the greater the effects. However, you should make vows that are within your capacity based on your current condition. Do not overpromise and underdeliver.

You should also include the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, and grant me a child. I vow that I will accumulate more merits and virtues, do more good deeds, and raise this child to be a respectable person who propagates Buddhism.”

- Furthermore, you should also perform life liberations as often as you can. Life liberation encompasses all three types of giving: the giving of wealth, the giving of Dharma, and the giving of fearlessness. It is better to release in large quantities as the merits and virtues of doing so are immense.
- Those who wish to conceive should refrain from wearing high heels.
- Reciting sutras and mantras, making vows, and performing life liberations are the Three Golden Buddhist Practices that Guan Yin Bodhisattva bestows upon us. If you combine these three practices, and sincerely pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva for protection and blessings, you will certainly have your wishes fulfilled. Countless fellow Buddhist practitioners have

resolved their problems by following these Three Golden Buddhist Practices.

- We should also learn to act in accordance with karmic conditions. According to Buddhism, everything in the universe is governed by the law of cause and effect, and it is not up to us to reason or find justification.

When you receive something naturally, it is then auspicious. It is better not to forcefully request what you were not meant to have, especially when it comes to conceiving children. Children granted to you as a result of your forceful request are unlikely to be auspicious, and it is highly likely that they will enter your life to collect karmic debts (e.g. children who are difficult, disobedient, sickly, or have a short life expectancy).

89. Making vows to help people become spiritually awakened

Q: Master Lu, many fellow Buddhist practitioners, including me, want to introduce Buddhism to others and help them become spiritually awakened. We want to make vows to do so but are afraid that we will not be able to fulfil our vows. Could you please advise how we should make such vows, and how we can encourage more people to learn Buddhism?

A:

- It is considered a great vow to introduce Buddhism to a certain number of people and help them become spiritually awakened within a certain period of time. Many people are afraid that they would not be able to fulfil the vow, so they

hesitate to make it.

- In fact, helping people to become spiritually awakened is the same as educating others. When a college professor teaches college students, he/she is an educator and when a kindergarten teacher teaches young children, he/she is also an educator. When Master Lu answers Buddhism-related questions raised by his disciples, he is helping his disciples become spiritually awakened. If you help your friends and answer their questions regarding how to recite the *Little House* or how to perform daily recitations, then you are also helping them spiritually awakened.
- A good way to help people become spiritually awakened is to answer their questions. For example, you may answer questions posted on Master Lu’s blog. However, you must ensure that you answer the questions in a manner in line with the correct Buddhist principles and values, including the right view, right faith, right mindfulness, and right thought. You must not mislead others or say anything that deviates from the proper path of Buddhism.
- Another good method to help people become spiritually awakened is writing about your own experiences and the insights you have gained. The sharing of your personal stories with others will demonstrate the benefits of practising Buddhism. By encouraging more people to have faith in Buddhism, and inspiring them to start cultivating their minds and change their behaviour, you are indeed assisting them with their spiritual awakening.
- If you are unsure about the number of people you can help, but possess great resolve, and wish to spread Buddhism and

help others become spiritually awakened throughout the rest of your life, then you can make the following vow: “I, <full name>, vow that for the rest of my life, I will follow the teachings of the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva and help to save sentient beings from suffering. I will help as many people as I possibly can.”

However, you should always make sure that a vow is within your capacity, because helping “as many people as I possibly can” is a great commitment. Once this great vow is made, you must fully devote yourselves to spreading Buddhism, and you must not pursue personal enjoyment. You must be dedicated to awakening sentient beings spiritually. If an opportunity arises for you to help people become spiritually awakened and you fail to do so, you will have broken your vow. Similarly, if you waste a lot of time, then it is also unacceptable.

- People suffering from a serious or terminal illness can say the following prayer: “The Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva, if I, <full name>, can stay alive, I will share my experience with others to demonstrate the benefits of practising Buddhism. Throughout the rest of my life, I will try to help people to have faith in Buddhism, to cultivate, and to believe in Guan Yin Bodhisattva.”
- The merits and virtues that you will gain from helping others in their spiritual awakening after making a vow is greater than without a vow.
- Once again, when making vows, you must ensure that you

have the capacity to fulfil them, and not break the vows you have made. Please refer to **Q&A 41: What to do if you are unable to keep vows?**

90. Having Dream Tests

Q: Master Lu, what kind of dream is considered a “Dream Test”?

A:

- Dream Tests can be presented in many different forms. Generally, you will encounter a Dream Test after making a vow to observe certain precepts. Along the path of your Buddhist practice, Dream Tests are considered to be “pre-qualifying tests”, meaning that they help you understand the current level of your practice and guide you in adjusting the direction of your practice.
- For example, one may have a Dream Test after making a vow to adopt a vegetarian diet on the 1st and 15th day of every lunar month or for the rest of their life; to never steal again; or to refrain from sexual misconduct going forward.
- In Dream Tests, there may be scenarios which present fresh seafood or your favourite meat dishes to see if you give in to the temptation, or money on the ground to tempt your greed.
- If you are able to pass your Dream Test, your level of practice will rise, meaning that your wisdom, power and spiritual state will reach a higher level. Also, part of your karmic obstacles would be eliminated. However, once you have passed a Dream Test, you will still encounter other Dream

Tests in the future. Passing one Dream Test does not mean that you will never be tested again.

- Suppose a person vowed to never go fishing again but broke the vow in his dream, e.g. he dreamt that he went fishing and ate the fish that he had killed. This would then be a typical example of failing a Dream Test. While awake, this person might have consciously convinced himself not to go fishing. But doing the opposite in his dream reveals that his subconscious self has failed to resist the temptation. Although he broke his vow only in a dream and not in reality, he has still broken the law in the spirit world. As a result, he will experience some misfortune in the near future.
- When you fail a Dream Test, your level of practice will be downgraded. Since you have broken precepts in the spirit world, you should repent by reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***. Generally, 49 times is sufficient. In particularly serious cases, you need to recite more, e.g. 108 times.

The most common Dream Tests are those related to eating meat or non-vegetarian food. If you consume meat in a dream, you should recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 49 times; if, before swallowing the non-vegetarian food, you realised the error and spat it out instead, you are considered to have passed the Dream Test.

- If you have a Dream Test in which you commit killing of animals, you should recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 49 times, as well as the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** to help the spirits of the deceased animals in your dream to ascend to a higher spiritual realm.

- If you have a Dream Test in which you kill a person, you should recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 108 times, and recite 21 *Little Houses* addressed to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”.
- If you have a Dream Test in which you commit a particularly serious case of sexual misconduct, you should recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 108 times.
- If you dream about relatively minor wrongdoings such as lying or deceiving others, you can recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 27 times.
- On the day you fail a Dream Test, (within 24 hours after the dream starts), you can complete more recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** to specifically repent of this. For example, you can recite it 49 or 108 times within 24 hours.
- If 24 hours have already passed, then you should not do these extra recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** in a day. You can only split the total number into smaller portions and spend several days finishing them. Do not recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** over 7 times per day, as it will be difficult to cope once the karmic obstacles are activated. Therefore, it is best to split the total number of recitations over several days. You could also temporarily stop your daily recitation of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***, and instead recite it 7 times per day to specifically address the issue of failing the Dream Test.
- After repenting, you should make the same vow again in front of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

- As a matter of fact, we encounter similar tests in our daily lives, not just in dreams. For example, when family members invite us to eat freshly killed fish and shrimp, or when we face a situation that tempts us to lose our temper, etc. When you pass a test in real life such as those described above, it is wise to pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva: “The Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva, in the past, when I, <your full name>, encountered <incident>, I would have committed a wrongdoing. Since I am now cultivating my mind and practising Buddhism, I have not committed the same wrongdoings again.” With the above prayer, Guan Yin Bodhisattva will give blessings to you, and good things will happen to you.
- Guan Yin Bodhisattva is merciful and compassionate, and is much like a mother to us. She will never abandon nor judge us; she will only feel sympathetic towards us. Hence, we can tell Guan Yin Bodhisattva everything.

91. Learning Buddhism by listening to Master Lu’s radio programs and reading his blog

Q: I just started following Master Lu’s Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door to practise Buddhism and cultivate my mind. As I have a busy job with limited spare time, can I focus only on performing the Three Golden Buddhist Practices of Guan Yin Citta — performing recitations, making vows, and performing life liberations—without listening to the recordings of Master Lu’s radio programs? Will I still achieve the same results?

A:

- Performing recitations, making vows and performing life liberations are the Three Golden Buddhist Practices that the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva bestows upon us. These Three Golden Buddhist Practices help us obtain a safe and healthy life and accumulate good fortune and wisdom. We should learn to use them well.
- Listening to Master Lu’s radio programs and reading the blog are very important, as you can gain new knowledge from other people’s questions, and apply what you have learned to your own problems. At the same time, you will be able to learn the latest teachings of Master Lu as these come directly from Guan Yin Bodhisattva.
- Listening to Master Lu’s radio programs can also allow us to connect to Master Lu’s energy, helping us deepen our understanding of the essence of Buddhist teachings.
- If you only perform recitations without listening to Master Lu’s radio programs or reading Master Lu’s blog, it can be compared to teaching yourself a subject with only a textbook. Learning on your own is a very difficult way to master any subject. Every student needs a good teacher for guidance.

Only by delving deeply into this Buddhist practice, by continuously listening, reading and learning from Buddhist teachings, can you truly break through ignorance and become enlightened. Therefore, it is particularly important to listen to the recordings of Master Lu’s radio programs, such as *Buddhism: Your Questions Answered* and

Buddhism in Plain Terms.

92. What do expectant mothers need to know when performing recitations?

Q: Dear Master Lu, which sutras and mantras should an expectant mother recite for her unborn child? Can she recite *Little Houses*? Please kindly advise.

A:

- For expectant mothers, it is generally better to have a Totem Reading performed by Master Lu to ascertain the exact number and types of sutras and mantras to recite. It is because they depend on the background of the spirit who will be reborn, such as the spirit's level of cultivation in its past lives. Suppose an expectant mother has been through tremendous difficulties in life. If the spirit that will be reborn does not have a high enough level of cultivation, then the child will experience certain hardships and misfortune after they are born.

In this case, the expectant mother needs to recite the ***Gong De Bao Shan Shen Zhou*** in advance to transfer the merits and virtues from the child's previous lives into this life to eliminate disasters. The karmic obstacles in their later years can be resolved by performing recitations as they grow up. Generally, expectant mothers can recite the ***Gong De Bao Shan Shen Zhou*** 27 times per day.

- If the expectant mother is physically weak and often ill, or if

she is expecting a baby girl and lacking *Yang* energy, she should recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** at least 7 times per day, the more the better.

- If a child has poor hearing, eyesight, or other prenatal deficiencies, one can recite the **Heart Sutra** at least 7 times per day for the child, to help the child attain wisdom.
- If the developing baby has severe karmic obstacles from their previous lives, one can recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** once per day, and **Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan** 21 times per day. Recitation of the mantras and sutras above helps to repent and eliminate some of the child's karmic obstacles from their previous lives.
- If a Totem Reading by Master Lu is not available, the expectant mother can perform the following daily recitations for the developing baby: the **Great Compassion Mantra** 3 times, the **Heart Sutra** 7 times, the **Gong De Bao Shan Shen Zhou** 27 times, and the **Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan** 21 times. Reciting the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** for the unborn baby is usually not recommended. It should only be recited once a day if the unborn baby's condition is unstable or the expectant mother experiences any adverse reactions. It is best not to increase the recitations of sutras and mantras at will, and not to recite *Little Houses* for your developing baby.
- During the first trimester, if the expectant mother is in good health, then it is best not to recite any *Little Houses*. After the first trimester, when the baby is in a stable condition, she can start to recite *Little Houses* for her karmic creditors and the children lost from prior miscarriages or abortions.

- If the expectant mother has a foreign spirit occupying her body, *Little Houses* should be recited as soon as possible to help her karmic creditors ascend to a higher spiritual realm. For example, she often experiences misfortune, illnesses, or bleeding which may lead to a miscarriage. Other signs include frequent nightmares, seeing karmic creditors in her dreams, or if Master Lu has examined her Totem and said that there is a foreign spirit occupying her body.
- It would be even better if fellow Buddhist practitioners or family members can help the expectant mother to recite the *Little Houses* on her behalf to help her karmic creditors ascend to a higher spiritual realm. That said, it is fine for the expectant mother to burn the *Little Houses* herself.
- An expectant mother should only recite *Little Houses* during the daytime.
- Note that expectant mothers should avoid reciting *Little Houses* for other people, e.g. deceased family members. Additionally, they should particularly avoid reciting *Little Houses* addressed to karmic creditors of those with serious/terminal illnesses.
- Expectant mothers should perform daily recitations for themselves, which should include the ***Great Compassion Mantra***, the ***Heart Sutra***, the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***, the ***Cundi Dharani***, etc. It is best to recite the ***Great Compassion Mantra*** as many times as possible. And at night, she should only recite the ***Great Compassion Mantra***.
- The expectant mother should increase her exposure to sunlight, and pray to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas frequently.

If she frequently spends time admiring the images or statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, then she is likely to give birth to a beautiful baby.

- During the first month of pregnancy when the foetus has just formed its shape, it is best for the expectant mother to stay at home peacefully. She should avoid places that have impure energy or lack *Yang* energy. This includes hospitals, cemeteries, or places where religious practices are performed, as these places often have a burial ground nearby.
- During the first trimester, it is not recommended for the expectant mother to perform life liberations on her own due to the instability of the baby at that stage. She could ask her family members to perform life liberations on her behalf, or perform them personally after the first trimester. However, it is generally not recommended to perform life liberations on behalf of the foetus, or recite the *Little Houses* directly for the foetus (except under special circumstances).

93. Things to be aware of when placing statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on an altar

Q: Dear Master Lu, how do we invite the statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to the Buddhist altar in our homes? How can we bless the statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on our own? Is there anything we should take note of afterwards?

A:

- If you are following Master Lu's Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door to cultivate your mind and practise Buddhism, it is best to invite a statue or an image of Guan Yin Bodhisattva to the Buddhist altar in your home. At the same time, we must respect all religions, all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and all spiritual beings.

As for the selection of statue or image of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, it is better to choose a porcelain statue in a standing posture, holding the purification vase and the willow branch. Avoid those that contain images of dragons or other auspicious creatures.

It is also recommended that you select a new statue or image that has not been blessed. You can bring the statue or image home and perform the ceremony on your own to invite Bodhisattva to enter the statue. Nevertheless, it is better to have Master Lu, or other esteemed, knowledgeable and greatly virtuous Buddhist monastics or lay Buddhist practitioners bless the statue or image for you.

- You can go to a Buddhist shop to select a statue or image of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. If you favour a particular statue or image, or if you feel that the statue or image of Bodhisattva is smiling at you, then you should select that statue or image. Otherwise, you can also print the image of Guan Yin Bodhisattva of the Guan Yin Citta Centre in colour and frame it.
- In most cases, if you have not attained a great spiritual state, you do not possess the ability to bless statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas yourself. However, you can still

invite Guan Yin Bodhisattva to enter the statue or image on your altar. You can choose to do so on an auspicious day such as the 1st or 15th day of the lunar month, and pick an auspicious time such as 6am or 8am (or 4pm if it is not possible in the morning). Find an ideal place to set up your altar. After you have invited the statue or image of Guan Yin Bodhisattva to the altar, you can make offerings of water, fruit, oil, and incense.

It is best to make incense offerings with three incense sticks. Join your palms together and raise the incense sticks slightly above your head, and bow to Guan Yin Bodhisattva 3 times. After you place the incense sticks into the incense burner in front of the statue or image of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, you can say the following prayer: “I sincerely invite the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva to perform miracles, and enter the sacred <statue or image> offered by me, <your full name>”. You should then recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times and the **Heart Sutra** 7 times, and then kneel and make 3 full bows. The more recitations of the **Great Compassion Mantra** and the **Heart Sutra** you do, the better the result.

- Before beginning your recitation, you can say your prayers to Guan Yin Bodhisattva. For example, you can sincerely pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva for protection and blessings, and to grant your family safety and harmony. You can also make vows such as praying to Guan Yin Bodhisattva twice a day, once in the morning and once at night, etc. Ensure that your incense sticks are burning during the entire recitation process.

- After you have invited the statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas onto your altar, avoid touching them unless necessary. In general, you are not required to clean the statues or images frequently. If too much dust has accumulated, you may gently clean it with a new piece of dry cloth during the daytime. Recite the **Heart Sutra** while cleaning.

If you ever need to relocate the statues or images, you should first make an incense offering, and tell Buddhas and Bodhisattvas about the relocation. Then you should recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 3 times, and the **Heart Sutra** 3 times. After the incense has completely finished burning, you can relocate the statues or images (during the daytime) while reciting the **Heart Sutra**.

- If you are out of town on a business trip and nobody can offer incense in your home, then leave the altar uncovered and offerings untouched. Make offerings of fresh water, fruit and flowers before you leave. You may choose not to offer fruit and flowers if you will be away for a long period of time. During the time you are away from home, you should offer the “Heart Incense” (visualise yourself making incense offerings), and pray to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in your home twice a day— once in the morning and once at night.
- If you will be staying at a particular place away from home for an extended period of time, you may take a photo of the Buddhist altar in your home. You can print the picture, frame it, and set it up at your temporary residence for praying. You can later pack the framed photo and offering utensils when you need to go back home.

94. Difference between offering Heart Incense and real incense

Q: Respected Master Lu, I am now following Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door. I have started reciting sutras and mantras, and learning Buddhism. However, I do not have a Buddhist altar in my home yet. Will my recitations still be as effective? I have learnt from your radio programs that we can offer the “Heart Incense” instead. Does offering the Heart Incense have the same effect as offering real incense?

A:

- When you offer the Heart Incense, you first visualise the image of Guan Yin Bodhisattva in front of you. Next, visualise yourself performing the following steps: Light the oil lamp, take an incense stick and light it with the oil lamp, hold the incense stick upright with both hands, raise it with hands touching the forehead, and place the incense into the incense burner. Finally, visualise that you kneel and bow, and then pray. As you offer the Heart Incense, you are using your mind to connect yourself with the energy of Guan Yin Bodhisattva.

If you are limited by your living conditions and cannot have an altar in your home to pray to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, or if you are on a business trip, on holidays or travelling away from home, you can offer the Heart Incense to pray to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as a sign of respect. By doing so, you can connect yourself with Guan Yin Bodhisattva’s energy, and ensure the quality of your scripture recitations.

- When you offer real incense, you should offer one or three

incense sticks and pray to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. You can make incense offerings twice a day, once in the morning and once at night. Offering incense is a way to pay respect to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. It is recommended for Buddhist practitioners to have an altar in their homes. If a person is unable to have an altar in their home, or experiences objections from family members, it is usually caused by their own karmic obstacles.

- If you offer the Heart Incense with sincerity, you will still be able to connect yourself with the energy of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

However, it would be much better to offer real incense in front of a real altar. On one hand, if you have just started practising Buddhism and find it difficult to control your thoughts and your mind, it is much better for you to focus your attention on physical statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas than to try to control your scattered thoughts and visualise Buddhas and Bodhisattvas at the same time. It is also easier to connect yourself with the energy of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas when offering real incense. On the other hand, it would be a great blessing and a meritorious deed if you could have statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in your home that you can constantly pray to. Your home could also be frequented by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and your family would be protected and blessed.

- It is important to act in accordance with your karmic conditions. When you do not have the conditions for setting up an altar in your home, do not insist upon it. As you

progress along the path of cultivating your mind, and with the blessings of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, you will naturally find a suitable location in your home to invite statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas when the time is right. Therefore, do not cling to this matter when the conditions are not ready. As long as you sincerely recite sutras and mantras and practise Buddhism with diligence, everything will eventually work out for you.

If you are currently unable to have a Buddhist altar in your home, you can still perform recitations. As long as you recite with sincerity, it would still be efficacious.

- To learn how to sincerely pray and make offerings to statues and images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, please refer to **Q&A 5: Placement of a Buddhist altar.**

95. Do we need to continuously recite *Little Houses*?

Q: Dear Master Lu, I am a beginner. Once we start reciting *Little Houses*, do we need to continuously recite them? Could you please advise us? Thank you!

A:

- The *Little House* is an important Buddhist method that the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva bestows upon us in this Age of Dharma Decline. It can be used to help spirits to ascend to a higher spiritual realm, and also eliminate our karmic obstacles.
- As we are in the cycle of rebirth within the six realms of existence, we have countless karmic obstacles and they

follow us everywhere like a shadow. Even after many cycles of death and rebirth and we have thus been reborn into many different bodies with different identities, we still carry negative karma from our previous lives and must receive our retribution in this life. This is why some fortune tellers are able to predict our fate with great accuracy.

These karmic debts that we owe from our previous lives need to be repaid in this life. As a Buddhist saying goes, “Good is always rewarded, and vice is always punished. It is not that there is no consequence; rather, it is just that the right time has not come yet.” When the right time comes, and our karmic creditors come to collect karmic debts from us, we will be stricken with predestined calamities or illnesses.

- Those who start cultivating their minds and reciting sutras and mantras may often dream about their karmic creditors, and are likely to foresee their impending disasters in dreams. In fact, this is a reminder to us that we need to pay our karmic debts in time.

In addition, only legitimate karmic creditors are allowed to collect karmic debts from you, as all your karmic creditors have either an affinity with you from your previous lives or permission from the underworld. In other words, random spirits will not come and collect karmic debts from you for no reason.

The recitation of *Little Houses* is the most effective method to repay your karmic debts. In the underworld, *Little Houses* are considered to be the largest denomination of currency. When spirits receive the power of *Little Houses*,

they can then ascend to a higher spiritual realm. Generally speaking, if you dream about your karmic creditors, it is best to recite *7 Little Houses* for each of them and address the *Little Houses* to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”.

- The number of karmic creditors that each person has varies. If you have many karmic obstacles and thus have a large amount of karmic debts, then you need to recite a large number of *Little Houses*. Generally, if you experience a major illness, it is usually due to a serious karmic obstacle. In such cases, you should recite a relatively substantial number of *Little Houses* within a short period of time.

If you have fewer karmic obstacles, and you owe a small amount of karmic debts, then you do not need to recite as many *Little Houses* within a short period of time. However, over the course of our lives, we need to continuously repay our karmic debts.

- Reciting *Little Houses* not only helps you save yourself and changes your destiny, but also helps your deceased family members ascend to a higher spiritual realm. When you perform recitations for others to help them resolve problems and prevent disasters, you also accumulate merits and virtues.

Merits and virtues can be used to eliminate karmic obstacles. People with a lot of merits and virtues can turn misfortune into a blessing, and stay safe during this Age of Dharma Decline, which is fraught with natural and man-made disasters.

- The Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin

Bodhisattva has given us this wonderful method of Buddhism, providing us with the opportunity to change our own destiny and eliminate disasters through repaying our karmic debts. However, it is our decision to use this method or not.

It is only right and proper to pay what is due. However, it is your choice whether or not to repay your karmic debts: You can choose to repay the debts and eliminate disasters, or choose not to repay these debts and undergo the resulting karmic retributions later.

- Learning and practising Buddhism, performing recitations and cultivating your mind is a life-long endeavour, and should not only be for the short-term. If you practise Buddhism only to resolve a specific problem, you will still be helpless when another one arises. In other words, you still have no control over your own life. In addition, if you constantly seek help from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas only when you are in trouble, it will be difficult for you to receive protection and blessings in the long run.

96. Offering the First Incense and performing recitations on the first day of Chinese New Year

Q: Master Lu, Chinese New Year is approaching. How do we offer the “First Incense” on the first day of the Chinese New Year? What should we be aware of?

A:

- Contrary to popular belief, the offering of the First Incense on the first day of the Chinese New Year does not refer to the first incense that is burnt on that day. It refers to the incense offered between 12am to 2am local time on the first day of the Chinese New Year. During this period of time, all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions and the three periods of time, including Guan Yin Bodhisattva, all the Bodhisattvas on duty, and Dharma Protectors, will arrive. Therefore, your prayers will be most effective when you offer the First Incense during this period. The best time is midnight (12am) of Chinese New Year’s Eve, that is, 0.00am of the first day of the Chinese New Year. Generally, any incense offered between 12am to 2am is considered to be the First Incense, and incense offered between 12am to 1am is considered to be the “Early First Incense”.
- In this Age of Dharma Decline, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have already entered the statues and images on the altars in our homes. If you have a Buddhist altar in your home, you can stay at home and sincerely make the offering of the First Incense and pray to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. If you do not have an altar in your home, you can make your First Incense offering at a nearby temple frequented by many devotees.
- Before you make the First Incense offering, avoid consumption of alcohol, meat dishes, or any of the five pungent spices. It would be best if you brush your teeth and have a shower beforehand. It is strongly recommended for females who are menstruating to have a shower. You should wear neat and colourful attire (preferably in red). Avoid wearing black or white clothes, short skirts, flip flops or

slippers. It is recommended that you leave your lights on for the entire night at home.

- You can first make fruit and flower offerings. The fruit should be cleaned beforehand. Do not offer bananas, peaches, or any cooked dishes. You can say your prayers to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas while making the offerings. As soon as it is 12am, you can make the First Incense offering. Do not use any broken incense sticks. You should sincerely offer the incense, kneel and bow down 9 times and then say your prayers to Guan Yin Bodhisattva. The oil lamps should remain burning while you are offering the incense.
- When you say your prayers and wishes, you should respectfully and sincerely gaze at the statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, state your full name three times and pray to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for protection and blessings.

If you have previously changed your name, have a nickname or use a foreign name that is different from your birth name, it is best not to state these names unless you have successfully lodged the *Application for Change of Name* for these names in front of the statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. If you are unsure, it is best to state the name that is the most frequently used by yourself or others.

- You can say your prayers quietly and softly. It is best to limit yourself to two wishes in your prayer. Each family member can make two wishes each. In most circumstances, only the first two wishes made are likely to come true. If a third wish is made, it should only be general. For example, wishing for good health, safety or harmony, etc. The third wish should

not be about something that is particularly important. If you make too many wishes, or if your wishes are too complicated or excessive, your wishes may not come true because of your greed.

- From the night of Chinese New Year’s Eve until the end of the first day of the Chinese New Year, it is best to perform recitations as much as possible. The merits and virtues accumulated from the recitations during this period are multiplied. It is best to recite the **Great Compassion Mantra**, the **Heart Sutra**, and the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance**. On the night of Chinese New Year’s Eve, you can recite all the sutras and mantras that are included in Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door, including those contained in the *Little Houses*, and those that are usually not recommended to be recited at night, such as the **Heart Sutra**, and the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra**.
- If there is no Buddhist altar in your home, you can offer the Heart Incense. But it will be hard to achieve the same effects as a real First Incense offering, and it is not recommended that you recite sutras and mantras throughout the night.
- During the Chinese New Year’s Eve and the first day of Chinese New Year, it is vital to remember that it is the time we bid farewell to the old and welcome the new. We should remain happy and cheerful, spread kind words and good wishes, and perform recitations as often as possible. It is best to stay up all night for the arrival of Chinese New Year. If you cannot wait and end up falling asleep before 12am, then “the old year has not gone, and the new year has not come” for you. Therefore, it is recommended that you

stay up late. The longer you stay up on the night, the longer the elders in your family would live. On Chinese New Year's Eve, you can also switch on all the lights in your house to make it brighter.

It is best to avoid looking at yourself in the mirror too often on Chinese New Year's Eve, and each time should be limited to less than 30 seconds. Avoid breaking any bowls or cups in your home, or tipping over an oil container and spilling oil. Refrain from speaking loudly or inappropriately, and avoid joining a crowd. Most importantly, you should not argue or fight with others.

- On the first day of Chinese New Year, it is best not to visit other people's homes. To promote good fortune, it is best to spread good wishes and speak kind words. For example, even if someone's financial situation is not ideal, they can maintain a sense of optimism and positivity by vocalising their happiness. Such expressions are aimed to bring them good luck. In addition, during the first month of Chinese New Year, you should not leave your house empty. Generally, it is best not to have the entire family go away during this month. If your house is empty, it may attract foreign spirits.
- During the daytime on Chinese New Year's Eve and after 9am on the first day of the Chinese New Year, you can display photos of deceased family members to pay your respect and burn *Little Houses* for them. It is best not to do so at night on Chinese New Year's Eve. For all other times during the Chinese New Year celebration period, we can perform recitations and help the deceased ascend to a higher spiritual realm.

97. Zodiac year of birth (or *Ben Ming Nian*)

Q: Dear Master Lu, this year is my zodiac year of birth (or *Ben Ming Nian* in Chinese, referring to the year of one's Chinese zodiac animal in which one was born). Would this affect me? What should I be aware of? Should I wear red coloured undergarments?

A:

- During your zodiac year of birth, the energy field of your birth time can cause conflicts with your destiny. Throughout the year, you are likely to be intentionally excluded, sidelined, or picked on by others, suffer from illnesses, and experience misfortune in your career, etc. For example, 2011 is the Year of the Rabbit. If you were born in the Year of the Rabbit, then 2011 is your zodiac year of birth.
- According to Chinese custom, people wear red coloured underclothing during their zodiac year of birth, and it does have some effect. However, most importantly, you should diligently perform recitations, make vows, and perform life liberations.
- In addition to persisting with your daily recitations, you should also recite the *Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou* 49 times, and the *Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots* 29 times per day, praying for resolution of your karmic conflicts, elimination of disasters, and for your safety.

At the same time, you can make a vow to recite the same number of *Little Houses* as your age. For example, if you are 48 years old, you can vow to recite at least 48 *Little Houses*

for your karmic creditors; those who are 21 years or under can all recite 21 *Little Houses* when encountering their zodiac year of birth. Say the following prayer: "May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, and help me resolve the predestined calamities of my zodiac year of birth." It would be best to begin reciting and burning these *Little Houses* three months prior to your birthday with the last batch being burnt on your birthday.

- Throughout the year bearing the Chinese zodiac sign of your birth, you can burn 27 *Little Houses* in one sitting every month, and address them to the "Karmic Creditor of <your full name>". You may say this prayer: "May Tai Sui Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to stay safe in _____(month)." You can burn them at the beginning or middle of each lunar month.

For example, you may say this prayer: "May Tai Sui Bodhisattva protect and bless me, and help me to stay safe in January." If you do so every month, you will be safe and sound during all twelve months.

If you are too greedy and pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to keep you safe all year round in 2017, it might not work. In other words, if you only make a general prayer to keep you safe for the year, your wish may not be fulfilled. You need to resolve the predestined calamities of your zodiac year month by month. Hence, you should say this prayer and burn *Little Houses* in each month. (This method applies to all those whose energy fields have conflicts with their destiny in that zodiac year.)

- If possible, it would be best if you can frequently pray to Tai Sui Bodhisattva. For more details, refer to **Q&A 29: Tai Sui Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva of the year.**

98. Using images of Guan Yin Bodhisattva or Master Lu as a screensaver or profile picture

Q: Master Lu, I really like the image of the Guan Yin Bodhisattva statue from the Guan Yin Citta Centre. Can I use the image as a screensaver on my computer or as my profile picture (avatar) for chat rooms?

A:

- Using images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas or Master Lu as a computer screensaver is not appropriate. It is very disrespectful to Bodhisattvas if their images are flashed on the screen. We should always pray to statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattva in a sincere and solemn manner. Such a playful manner should be avoided.
- All images on the computer exist in a virtual format. As a result, one cannot bless the images of Bodhisattvas on the computer and invite the Bodhisattvas to enter them. This is also the case with images of Master Lu.
- In addition, these virtual images tend to flash on the computer screen repeatedly, and can therefore attract foreign spirits easily.
- If your computer is being used for browsing or storing inappropriate content, then using images of Buddhas and

Bodhisattvas or Master Lu as a screensaver or profile picture (avatar) is very disrespectful.

- Images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on your computer can be printed in colour, and then laminated or framed. You can follow Master Lu's instructions on how to invite Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to enter the images on your altar. You can then sincerely pray to the images. For more details, please refer to **Q&A 93: Things to be aware of when placing statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on altar.**

99. The Six Syllable Mantra

Q: Dear Master Lu, you previously mentioned that the **Six Syllable Mantra** is very powerful. I would like to know whether I can let my child recite this mantra as it is short and easy to memorise.

A:

- All sutras and mantras are bestowed upon us by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and each has its own extraordinary power and effects. Hence, they are all very good.
- The **Six Syllable Mantra** has yet to be included in the recommended daily recitation under Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door.
- If you are surrounded by wandering spirits, or if you encounter a particularly powerful foreign spirit, reciting this mantra can enhance your spiritual power and prevent the spirits from coming near you. In other words, the mantra can provide you with protection during emergencies.
- Under normal circumstances, if you recite the **Six Syllable**

Mantra without having sufficient spiritual power, you are likely to attract foreign spirits who may disturb you with unfriendly actions. For example, if you do not know martial arts but you choose to wield a powerful sword, people who are experienced in martial arts may come and challenge you.

- It is also very important to have a solid foundation for attaining Buddhahood before you recite this mantra. Therefore, you should be very cautious when reciting this mantra. This is especially true in the case of young children.

100. How to express gratitude to Guan Yin Bodhisattva?

Q: Dear Master Lu, I have started practising Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door and since then I have experienced positive changes in many aspects of my life. Recently I barely escaped a serious accident. I know it was Guan Yin Bodhisattva who protected and blessed me! But I do not know how to express my gratitude to Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Which sutras and mantras should I recite?

A:

- For people who have just started performing recitations and cultivating their mind, as long as they are sincere, and constantly doing good deeds and accumulating merits and virtues, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will protect and bless them. By performing recitations, we can repay our karmic debts and eliminate karmic obstacles. We can reduce major issues to minor ones and minor ones to nothing.
- If you wish to express your gratitude to Guan Yin Bodhisattva

for protecting and blessing you, you can make vows in front of the statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on the altar. For example, you can vow to be a vegetarian, or to introduce Buddhism to a certain number of people, helping them become spiritually awakened. You can also vow to spread the Dharma, or emulate the compassion of the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva, helping people who have affinity with the Buddha to reach their spiritual awakening.

- In fact, Guan Yin Bodhisattva does not need anything in return from us, but only hope that we can sincerely cultivate our minds and help other people become spiritually awakened. Therefore, to express our gratitude to Guan Yin Bodhisattva, we should learn from Guan Yin Bodhisattva and Master Lu to help people become spiritually awakened. In our daily lives, we should continuously promote Buddhism and help people become spiritually awakened, share our experiences with others to demonstrate the benefits of learning Buddhism whenever possible, and help more people to break through delusions and attain enlightenment. We should also practise the “giving of Dharma” whenever possible by teaching or sharing the Buddhist teachings and knowledge with others.
- In addition, you can do more recitations of the **Heart Sutra**. When you recite the **Heart Sutra**, you can connect yourself with the energy of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. This way, Guan Yin Bodhisattva will be able to sense your gratitude.
- You can also respond to the call of many followers of Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door to recite the **Great Compassion**

Mantra, or perform life liberations for Master Lu. You can pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to protect and bless Master Lu, so that he can dwell in this world for a long time to spread Buddhist teachings, helping more people who have affinity with the Buddha to be free from suffering and attain happiness through the practice of Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door.

101. Saying prayers when performing recitations

Q: Master Lu, how should we say our prayers when we perform recitations? Should we say the corresponding prayer before we start reciting each type of sutra or mantra? Or should we say an overall prayer before we start recitation? Or should we repeat our prayers with each recitation of a sutra or mantra?

A:

- Avoid saying your prayers with each recitation of a sutra or mantra. Once there was a Buddhist practitioner who said his prayers this way. After performing a Totem Reading for this Buddhist practitioner, Master Lu noticed that each title of the sutra or mantra he recited was “dark”. This was because most of the wishes in his prayers contained unwholesome karmic results, bringing about dark energy. Hence, if you say your prayers with each recitation of a sutra or mantra, the effects of your recitation will be impacted.
- Beginners can say the corresponding prayer before they start reciting each type of sutra or mantra. They can include multiple wishes in their prayers, but the number of wishes

should be limited. If one includes too many wishes in their prayers, their prayers may not be effective. In addition, it will serve to intensify their greed. For more details on saying prayers when performing recitations, refer to the procedures described in **Q&A 71 and Q&A 72: Introduction to Buddhist sutras and mantras.**

- If you still have many urgent or specific problems to resolve, then it would be best to say your prayers separately for each problem. This allows you to address the specific issues in order to attain better results.
- If you have reached a certain spiritual state, and you do not have many wishes or problems, you can say all the prayers once before starting your daily recitation, and then once again after completion. Your spiritual state elevates as you deepen your Buddhist practice, the way you say your prayers should be adjusted accordingly.

Those who have the feeling of a connection with Bodhisattvas' energy when they perform recitations can say their prayers once before reciting, and once again after finishing the recitation.

- The effect of performing recitations with a pure mind is different from performing recitations with a specific intention. Currently, many people perform recitations with the intention to achieve a specific outcome. It is recommended that we gradually rid ourselves of such desires, as they will reduce the effectiveness of the recitation.

As our spiritual state elevates and our Buddhist practice deepens, we must aim to ask for nothing in return.

Sometimes, when we have no desire for anything in return, we may end up getting what we want, whereas sometimes when we do have a desire for something, we do not receive anything in the end.

At times, even if we pray to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for something, we may not get what we want, as we do not have enough merits and virtues. On the other hand, sometimes even if we do not ask for anything, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas would help us regardless, because we have accumulated enough merits and virtues. Therefore, it would be false to assume that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will certainly bless us when we pray for many things.

- The effect of saying the corresponding prayer before reciting each type of sutra or mantra is comparable to the effect of performing more recitations and saying fewer prayers. However, the latter can sometimes be more effective than the former. Suppose you are asking someone a favour. Sometimes, even if you persistently ask this person for help, you may not necessarily get it done, as this may not be achievable in the human realm. It is common for us to perceive most events as following the norm of the human realm. In fact, they also follow the processes of heaven. In other words, many things that you pray for cannot materialise in the human realm because they are related to the effects of collective karma in heaven.
- Regardless of how you say your prayers, for the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***, the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots***, and the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra***, it is best to say the corresponding prayers separately before you

recite them.

- The ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** is an important scripture. Before reciting this text, it is best to say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to repent and eliminate karmic obstacles (in the body or a specific part of the body).”
- Before reciting the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots***, it is best to say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to resolve my negative karmic affinity with <the other party’s full name> (whether it be your relative, friend, or colleague’s name).”
- Before reciting the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra***, it is best to say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help the spirits of the deceased, whose death my actions caused, to ascend to a higher spiritual realm.”

102. *Application for True Name* (Applicable only for those who are unsure of original name)

Q: Dear Master Lu, I was adopted as a child, and my foster parents do not know my original birth name. How do I lodge my *Application for Change of Name*?

A:

- You can use the *Application for True Name* (see **Appendix C**). You can download the application form from www.GuanYinCitta.com. For the procedure for lodging the *Application for True Name*, you can refer to **Q&A 2: Lodging the Application for Change of Name**, and **Q&A 81: How to determine if an Application for Change of Name is successful?**
- Print the *Application for True Name* on a piece of yellow A4 paper.
- This method is only applicable for people who are unsure of their original birth name, and for children who were adopted.

103. Things to be aware of when wearing a Guan Yin Bodhisattva pendant

Q: Dear Master Lu, I would like to wear a pendant with an image of Guan Yin Bodhisattva on it for protection. What should I be aware of? Can women wear this kind of pendant? Does the pendant need to be blessed?

A:

- You can certainly wear a pendant with the image of Guan Yin Bodhisattva on it around your neck, regardless of your gender. Since we are now following Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door, we can receive more protection and blessings if we wear a Guan Yin Bodhisattva pendant.
- The entire pendant should only contain the image of Guan

Yin Bodhisattva. Avoid wearing those that contain figures of Chinese zodiac animals, or other images or text on the back of the pendant.

- The pendant should only be made of one single type of material. Ideally gold, but jade is also acceptable. However, avoid those made of a combination of materials, for example, jade with gold plating.
- If the pendant is made of jade, the colour should be pure and should not be multicoloured. A slightly darker shade of white would be the best choice. Green would not be as ideal.
- It would be best if the pendant can be blessed by Master Lu. Otherwise, you can perform recitations and pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to bless your pendant by following the steps mentioned in **Q&A 93: Things to be aware of when placing statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on an altar**. If you do not have a Buddhist altar and are not able to have the pendant blessed, you can still wear the pendant around your neck. As Buddhist practitioners who perform recitations and cultivate our minds daily, we will receive protection and blessings from Guan Yin Bodhisattva.
- It is usually fine to wear pendants while visiting the toilet/bathroom, but we must remove them when we take a shower. It would also be best to remove the pendant before going to bed, especially during intimacy between couples.
- If the pendant drops in the toilet or in other unclean places, it cannot be worn again and you must recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 49 times. If it drops in a clean place and it is not damaged, you should recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 7 times and you may still

wear it. If the pendant is damaged, then it should not be worn and you must recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 49 times.

104. Eyelid myokymia (eyelid twitch)

Q: Dear Master Lu, lately I experience an eyelid twitch. I heard that “twitching of the left eye is associated with wealth, and twitching of the right eye is associated with calamities.” Is this true? Which sutras or mantras should I recite?

A:

- When you experience an eyelid twitch, you should first find out whether it is due to personal factors, including going to bed too late, or being sleep deprived.
- The saying that “twitching of the left eye is associated with wealth, and twitching of the right eye is associated with calamities” is not accurate.
- There are techniques for determining if your eyelid twitch is indicating fortune or misfortune. You can determine which of the four implications apply to you depending on the date you experience an eyelid twitch. The four implications are: alcohol, food, money, and energy. “Alcohol” means that you will have the opportunity to consume alcohol; “food” means that people will provide you with food; “money” means that you will gain a small fortune; and “energy” means that you will lose your temper or be affected by someone else’s anger, which is not a good sign.

The method to determine the implication is as follows. First,

add the number of the month to the number of the day to obtain a total number (based on the Gregorian calendar).

Second, use this number to count in a clockwise direction starting from the location where your eyelid twitches. For example, if it is your upper left eyelid that twitches, then count in this order (four locations): The upper left eyelid, to the upper right eyelid, to the lower right eyelid, and then to the lower left eyelid.

Finally, continue to count one more round in a clockwise direction in the following order: “alcohol, food, money, energy”. The corresponding implication can then be determined by the location where the eyelid twitches in the first place.

- For example, today is the 5th of May, and your upper right eyelid is twitching. First, with May being the 5th month of the year, add the number of the month to the number of the day, we obtain the total number of $5 + 5 = 10$.

Second, you start from the upper right eyelid, and count clockwise: 1. upper right eyelid, 2. lower right eyelid, 3. lower left, 4. upper left, 5. upper right, 6. lower right, 7. lower left, 8. upper left, 9. upper right, and 10. lower right.

Finally, you then continue to count one more round in a clockwise direction in the following order: “alcohol, food, money, energy”. You will have “alcohol” at the lower left eyelid, “food” at the upper left eyelid, “money” at the upper right eyelid, and “energy” at the lower right eyelid. Since it was the upper right eyelid that was twitching and the corresponding sign in this location is “money”, it implies that you will experience good luck with money.

- If you try a few times, you will find that, on any given day, it does not matter which eyelid is twitching, the result will be the same. In other words, the implication of an eyelid twitch is only related to the date. Hence, the counting can be simplified to this formula: $T = X + Y$, where X is the number of the month, and Y is the number of the day. We can divide T by 4 to obtain the remainder N . If $N = 0$, the sign is alcohol; if $N = 1$, the sign is energy; if $N = 2$, the sign is money, and if $N = 3$, the sign is food.
- However, if you frequently experience eyelid myokymia, then from a medical perspective, you may lack a certain type of vitamin for your nerve endings.
- From the Buddhist perspective, you might have foreign spirits occupying your body, and you should recite *Little Houses* for your karmic creditors.

105. Performing recitations for exams

Q: Dear Master Lu, my son will be taking his exams soon. How should we recite Buddhist scriptures? What should we do on the day of the exam?

A:

- First of all, students must properly prepare for exams by studying hard.
- The following should be included in the daily recitation before the exam:
 1. At a minimum, recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times, the **Heart Sutra** 7 times, and the **Cundi Dharani**

21 or 49 times. The student can say the following prayer:
“May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <full name>, and help me to have my wishes fulfilled, to have the exams go smoothly, and to achieve academic success.”

2. Generally, the recitation of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** can be reduced to once per day about three months before the exam in order to avoid the activation of karmic obstacles, which may affect the student’s performance in exam.
 3. One month before the exam, the exam taker can also recite the ***Gong De Bao Shan Shen Zhou*** 49 times a day, and pray to the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva for protection and blessing, helping them to transform the good deeds they have done in the past into merits and virtues in the present, and to have the exams go smoothly.
- It is also recommended that you make vows and perform life liberations.
 - If you sense the presence of karmic creditors, it is best to recite *Little Houses* as soon as possible, and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <the exam taker’s full name>”.
 - If the exam taker does not have sufficient time to perform all the recitations, they can begin by reciting the ***Cundi Dharani*** 21 times per day. The effect would be significantly reduced if family members perform all the recitations, while the exam taker does not recite at all.
 - As the exam approaches, you can burn some *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* (the yellow paper on which you recorded the

scriptures you have recited for self-cultivation purposes) of the **Great Compassion Mantra**, the **Heart Sutra**, or the **Cundi Dharani**. Generally, you can burn the forms 3 to 4 days before the exam. It is best to avoid burning them on the day of the exam. However, if you think you are fully prepared, you can start to burn one or two (maximum) of these forms each week, starting one month before the exam.

- The day of the exam is also very important. The exam taker can wear a Guan Yin Bodhisattva pendant around their neck and wear clothes in the same colour as their Totem. Most importantly, the following recitations should be performed. The exam taker should recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times in the morning. Once the exam taker arrives at the exam venue, family members should continuously recite the **Heart Sutra** and the **Cundi Dharani** for the exam taker, and pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to protect and bless them, grant them wisdom, and help them successfully pass the exams.
- Before the results are released, there is still room for the outcome to be changed. Hence, you can still maximise your chances of success by continuing to recite the **Cundi Dharani**. Generally, you can recite it 108 times a day.
- You can also burn the *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* as usual. Generally, you can burn a maximum of two *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* each week (use those that contain 272 circles).
- You can also recite the **Gong De Bao Shan Shen Zhou** 49 to 108 times each day.
- If the mother is praying for better academic results for her child, the key is to follow the Three Golden Buddhist

Practices of Guan Yin Citta: Recite sutras and mantras, make vows and perform life liberations. In other words, one should perform meritorious deeds, make great vows and perform more life liberations.

106. Lodging an *Application for Convincing Family Members without a Buddhist altar*

Q: Dear Master Lu, I'm always on business trips and cannot settle in one place for an extended period of time. Hence, my situation does not allow me to have a Buddhist altar. Now, I would like to lodge the *Application for Convincing Family Members* (see **Appendix D**). Can I leave the application form on the altar at my parents' place, offer the "Heart Incense", perform recitations and say my prayers when I am out on trips?

A:

- If there is someone at home who can make incense offerings on the altar every day at fixed times, then you can ask them to leave the application form on the altar. You can make your Heart Incense offering at the same time, and then perform the required recitations for lodging the application.
- This method is also suitable for Buddhist practitioners who are not able to set up an altar in their homes.
- For example, if John does not have an altar in his home, but Jennifer does, then John can give his application form to Jennifer. Every morning at a fixed time, Jennifer makes incense offerings at her altar with John's application form

placed on the altar. At the same time, John shall visualise himself making an incense offering (the Heart Incense) at Jennifer’s altar. Then John can say his prayers, and perform recitations for lodging the application.

- Note: The owner of the altar, Jennifer, must also be a Buddhist practitioner who follows Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door. In addition, John and Jennifer must communicate clearly in advance to ensure effective coordination and avoid potential time differences.
- This method is beneficial because it not only helps Buddhist practitioners who do not have a Buddhist altar in their homes overcome the inconvenience, but also gives Buddhist practitioners who already have an altar in their homes another opportunity to accumulate merits and virtues.

107. Performing recitations for Dharma Protectors

Q: Recently, some Buddhist practitioners proposed that we perform recitations for Dharma Protectors. They said that each of us has our own Dharma Protectors, and they also need energy and sutra and mantra recitations. Is this recommended?

A:

- Dharma Protectors in heaven follow Buddhas and Bodhisattvas wherever they go; they are also Bodhisattvas.
- They are Bodhisattvas who have already resolved to save sentient beings. They do not dwell on any gains or losses, nor do they seek fame or material gains. We should never perceive Bodhisattvas from a human perspective.

Bodhisattvas do not ask for benefits or anything in return from the human realm.

- If other spiritual beings try to communicate with you and ask you to recite for them or to send them energy, you can recite *Little Houses* and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”. However, you should be cautious. A genuine Bodhisattva would never ask for such things.
- The spirit world is far more complex than we can ever imagine. It is best to strictly follow the teachings of Master Lu. Avoid methods that are not yet taught by Master Lu for the time being to prevent undesirable situations from occurring.

108. Performing life liberation on behalf of others

Q: Dear Master Lu, my family members do not believe in Buddhism, but I would like to perform life liberations on their behalf. What should I do?

A:

- If your family members do not believe in Buddhism, or are even opposed to your learning Buddhism, then performing life liberations on their behalf would be less effective. However, performing a life liberation for them would be better than not performing it at all.
- When you use your own money to perform a life liberation on behalf of others, you can say the following prayer to Guan Yin Bodhisattva beforehand, “May the Greatly Merciful and

Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva forgive me, <your full name>, I am now using my money to perform life liberation for <full name of the family member or friend>.”

You can then purchase fish, and perform the life liberation.

- Alternatively, before you perform the life liberation, you can say the following prayer at your altar: “I, <your full name>, will give <amount of money> to <full name of the family member or friend>. Please regard this money as his/hers.”
- Once you arrive at the site where the life liberation will take place, it is best not to mention your name again. If you frequently state your name, or think about your name in your mind, then a portion of the merits and virtues from performing the life liberation would be allocated to you. Simply say the following, “<full name of the family member or friend> has purchased <amount of fish>. May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless <full name of the family member or friend>... (followed by the rest of the prayer).”
- After you have performed the life liberation on behalf of others, it would be best if you let them know the quantity of fish that you have released for them. However, if they are completely against the practice of performing life liberations, then it would be best not to mention anything to them at all. This is to prevent them from creating karma of speech.

109. Sexual misconduct and adultery

Q: Dear Master Lu, I frequently commit sexual misconduct and

I started masturbating when I was young. I often have unwholesome thoughts and I cannot control myself. Even though I am now performing recitations and learning Buddhism, I am still having disrespectful thoughts towards Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. It is as if I have been possessed by a sex demon. I am troubled every day and I am desperate for help. Any advice would be much appreciated.

A:

- If you have had these types of unwholesome thoughts since childhood, it is likely that they derive from behaviours in your past life. You must change yourself by reciting Buddhist scriptures and cultivating your mind.
- You can recite *Little Houses* and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”. It is recommended that you recite 27 *Little Houses* for the first batch, followed by 7 *Little Houses* for each subsequent batch until your condition improves.
- You can recite the following for your daily recitation: The ***Great Compassion Mantra*** 7 times, the ***Heart Sutra*** at least 7 times, and the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 3 to 5 times. You need to combine these with the recitation of *Little Houses*. When you recite the ***Heart Sutra***, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, grant me strength and help me to refrain from committing sexual misconduct. Guan Yin Bodhisattva, please bless me with your compassion.”
- In addition, you can also recite the ***Da Ji Xiang Tian Nü Zhou***, and say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and

Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, and help me to eliminate my bad habit.” The recitation of this mantra provides additional support for you to eliminate this bad habit.

- In your daily life, you should also discipline yourself. Refrain from having impure thoughts, or reading or watching any obscene materials, magazines, newspapers, etc.

110. How do we know if we have the power to recite *Little Houses* for others?

Q: Dear Master Lu, how do we determine if we have enough spiritual power to recite *Little Houses* for others?

A:

- Helping and saving people is a good deed. However, if you do not have the capability, then you may even be dragged into the quagmire. You should only help others if you have the ability and adequate amount of spiritual power.
- A person who has enough spiritual power to recite *Little Houses* for others generally has the following characteristics:
 - Does not frequently have nightmares;
 - Does not feel fatigued or low in energy;
 - Has a relatively smooth career and a good life; and
 - Has good health and physical appearance, and is full of energy.
- Conversely, if you frequently fall ill, suffer from nightmares, experience misfortune, have too much *Yin* energy, or always

feel cold, then it would be best for you to recite *Little Houses* for yourself first before helping others.

- If you are obliged to help others recite *Little Houses*, then you must complete more recitations of the **Great Compassion Mantra** for yourself.

111. How to resolve predestined calamities related to one's love life

Q: Dear Master Lu, I previously went to see a fortune teller and he told me that I am unlucky in love. In reality, I have been experiencing problems with my marriage and my husband is having an affair. I am now following Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door, reciting Buddhist scriptures and cultivating my mind. I would like to know how I can resolve predestined calamities related to my love life?

A:

- Firstly, if you experience difficulties in your relationship, it is because of the karmic obstacles accumulated from your past lives.
- If you wish to have a happy and harmonious relationship, then it is important to ensure that you perform your daily recitations diligently:
 - The **Great Compassion Mantra** and the **Heart Sutra** are the foundation of your recitations.
 - The **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** is for repenting and eliminating karmic obstacles that have caused difficulties in your relationship.
 - The **Cundi Dharani** can help fulfil your wishes, and to

speed up the process of resolving your problems.

- The **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots** can help to resolve karmic conflicts in your relationship.
- You need to recite about 3 *Little Houses* per week and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”.
- At the same time, you can recite *Little Houses* and address them to “<Your full name> resolves karmic conflicts”. Prior to burning the *Little Houses*, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to resolve the negative karmic affinity between <full name of your husband> and me.”
- If a couple has had any abortions or miscarriages previously, they must recite *Little Houses* as soon as possible to help the child that was aborted or miscarried to ascend to a higher spiritual realm. Address those *Little Houses* to “Child of <full name of the mother>”. This is because the spirits of the aborted or miscarried children are very pitiful; they are unable to go anywhere and can only occupy the bodies of family members. This tends to cause illnesses, conflicts and misfortune in the home. It is therefore important to help the spirits of aborted or miscarried children ascend to a higher spiritual realm.
- Regardless of whether he is in love with someone or someone else is in love with him, the reason your husband is having an extramarital affair is that either he owes that person karmic debts, or that person owes him karmic debts from past lives.
- You should complete more recitations of the **Heart Sutra** for

him to help him gain wisdom. This will help him to realise that all these affairs are false and short-term, and that he should not commit misconduct.

- In addition, you need to recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** for him to eliminate the karmic debts he owes to others from his past lives.
- You can also recite the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** to resolve the negative karmic affinity between you and your husband. When reciting this mantra for this purpose, you should say the following the prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to resolve the negative karmic affinity between <full name of your husband> and me.”

If your husband is having a good relationship with someone outside the marriage, that means there are more positive karmic affinities than negative ones between them. In such a situation, you should first recite the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** between you and your husband. Once the negative karmic affinity between you and your husband is close to being resolved, then you can recite the mantra to resolve the karmic conflict between him and the person he is having an affair with.

However, if their relationship is not smooth and they frequently have conflicts and arguments, then that means there are more negative karmic affinities than positive ones between them. As there are fewer positive karmic affinities, once the positive affinities are exhausted, their relationship will likely come to an end.

In such a case, you need to do more recitations of the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots** for them, e.g. 49 times or even 108 times, and say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva help resolve the karmic conflicts between <full name of your partner> and <full name of the other party>”. During this period, you should do fewer recitations of the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots** for the relationship between you and your partner.

However, it is generally unnecessary to recite the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots** for your husband and “the other woman”. The focus should be on reciting the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots** for you and your husband, because any problems between two people within a marriage is caused by the outbreak of their own negative karmic affinity. Hence, the priority is to first resolve this particular negative karmic affinity.

- If there is a serious karmic conflict between you and your husband, you will need to recite *Little Houses* for him, addressing them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your husband’s full name>”.
- In addition, as the “predestined calamities related to one’s love life” are also a form of calamity, you can include the **Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou** in your daily recitation.
- Meanwhile, you should also make vows, perform life liberations, and perform more meritorious deeds. With this, you can pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to increase the positive karmic affinities between you and your husband.
- After your negative karmic affinity has been eliminated

through performing recitations, your relationship will become stable if there is still positive karmic affinity remaining between you and your partner. Even if the remaining positive karmic affinity is insufficient, you will not suffer too much pain.

- In any case, we should act in accordance with karmic conditions. It is best not to be too attached to anyone or anything.

112. Naming aborted or miscarried babies and setting up spirit tablets for them

Q: Dear Master Lu, I have previously had an abortion, miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy. How should I recite Buddhist scriptures to help the spirits of the children ascend to a higher spiritual realm? I have already named the child that I miscarried and set up a spirit tablet for the child on my altar. Is this alright?

A:

- If you have had an abortion, miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy, you need to recite at least 7 to 21 *Little Houses* for each child as long as they were not born alive. Generally, it takes at least 7 *Little Houses* to send each child away and 21 for them to be reborn in the human realm. However, if the child was destined to claim karmic debts from you, you may need to offer more *Little Houses*.
- After having burnt the *Little Houses*, if you dream about a

child dressed beautifully and leaving happily, or being led away by someone else, it means that the child has left. Conversely, if you dream about a child in an unfavourable condition, then you have to offer more *Little Houses* to help the child ascend to a higher spiritual realm.

- To recite *Little Houses* and help the spirit of a child ascend to a higher spiritual realm, you should address the *Little Houses* to “Child of <full name of the mother>”. Generally, you should write the full name of the mother. If you do not know the full name of the mother, you can write the full name of the father. You should not address the *Little House* in any other form. Do not write “Aborted child of <full name>” or “Miscarried child of <full name>”, etc. If you do not follow the proper way of filling out the *Little House*, the child’s spirit would not be able to ascend to a higher spiritual realm.
- Never name any aborted or miscarried children. Also avoid setting up spirit tablets for them on the altar. Otherwise, it will be very difficult for the spirits of the children to be reborn. Even after performing recitations of Buddhist scriptures, it will still be difficult to help their spirits ascend to a higher spiritual realm.
- If you have set up a spirit tablet for the child, and have now decided to invite it off the altar, then you should recite at least 21 *Little Houses* for the child before removing the tablet. Address the *Little Houses* to “Child of <full name of the mother>”.

On the day that you remove the tablet, you should recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times, the **Heart Sutra** 7

times, and the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 7 times. Say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to give the *Little Houses* to my child.” After burning the *Little Houses*, wrap the tablet with red fabric and store it flat in a clean and tidy place. It is important to note that the tablet should not be burnt.

113. Performing recitations for people with mental disorders

Q: I have been diagnosed with depression. I am constantly stuck in my own mind, have trouble sleeping, and feel irritable and disturbed. What should I do?

A:

- In most cases, mental disorders such as depression, epilepsy, etc. can be classified as illnesses related to karmic obstacles and foreign spirits.
- These types of illnesses all originate from one’s karmic obstacles from previous lives and foreign spirits. If you have committed serious wrongdoings in your previous lives, resulting in major karmic obstacles, your karmic creditors will come to claim their karmic debts in this lifetime. This is when you undergo karmic retributions. They may manifest in the form of feelings of irritability and disturbance, or even lead to your being unable to control your own emotions or willpower. This is because your mind can be controlled by foreign spirits.

- Once you realise the cause of your illness, you should repent and diligently perform recitations to eliminate your karmic obstacles and repay your karmic debts. The law of cause and effect is real. You should realise that it is all because you failed to do meritorious deeds in your previous lives. Instead, you committed numerous wrongdoings to others. That is the reason you have to undergo karmic retribution. You have no one to blame but yourself.

Therefore, you must sincerely repent and eliminate your karmic obstacles, to repay your karmic debts, and complete recitations to help your karmic creditors ascend to a higher spiritual realm. Once you have eliminated your karmic obstacles and paid off your karmic debts, then you will recover naturally.

- It is recommended that you recite the following sutras and mantras:
 - Recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times or more per day. You can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, grant me good health, and help me to increase my level of merits and virtues.”
 - Recite the **Heart Sutra** 21 times per day. You can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, grant me wisdom, and cure my depression (or any other mental illnesses).”
 - Recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 5 times per day. You can say the following prayer: “May

the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to repent and eliminate karmic obstacles that have caused my depression (or any other mental illnesses), and to cure my illness.”

- You should recite 3 or more *Little Houses* per week. These types of illnesses are usually caused by major karmic obstacles. You should start with 21 *Little Houses* as the first batch, followed by 21 *Little Houses* for each subsequent batch until you have fully recovered.
- At the same time, you can combine your recitations with making great vows and frequently performing life liberations. This will increase the effectiveness of treating your depression (or other mental illnesses).

114. Performing recitations on behalf of children

Q: How do we perform recitations on behalf of our children? What should we be aware of?

A:

- Generally, if you are performing recitations on behalf of your children, regardless of their age, you can recite the **Heart Sutra** for them, the more recitations you do the better. Reciting the **Heart Sutra** helps children to gain wisdom, obey their parents, and perform better at school.
- For the number of recitations of the **Great Compassion Mantra**, it should be based on each child’s circumstances. If a child is physically well, then you can recite the **Great**

Compassion Mantra 3 to 7 times per day.

If a child is physically weak or suffers from a chronic illness due to karma, then it is recommended that you recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 21 to 49 times per day. You can sincerely ask Guan Yin Bodhisattva to heal your child's illness.

If a child is very stubborn, hard to discipline, or displays unruly behaviour, then the number of recitations of the **Great Compassion Mantra** should be limited to no more than 7 times per day. Otherwise, it may increase their spiritual power and therefore it would be even more difficult for you to discipline them.

- If a child has a chronic illness due to karma or a prenatal/genetic disorder, then you should also include the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** in your recitation. The number of recitations that you should complete depends on the age of the child:
 - For children less than 1 year old, it is best to limit the recitations to once per day;
 - For children between the ages of 1 and 3, you can recite it once or twice per day;
 - For children between the ages of 3 and 12, you can recite it up to twice per day; and
 - For children between the ages of 12 and 18, you can recite it up to 3 times per day, unless they are suffering from a serious illness, in which case you can recite it 3 to 5 times per day for them. For children above the age of 12, you can slightly increase the number of recitations according to their illness and the severity of their karmic

obstacles, but it is best to limit it to no more than 5 times per day. This is because children are still young and weak, they may collapse if their karmic obstacles are activated.

- As soon as you start reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** for your child, you should also recite *Little Houses* in a timely manner to help the karmic creditor ascend to a higher spiritual realm. Otherwise, once the karmic obstacles are activated and transformed into spirits, a large number of *Little Houses* may be required within a short period of time. Hence, it is recommended that you recite at least 3 *Little Houses* per week to avoid the possible exacerbation of your child’s illness.
- If the parents have previously had an abortion or miscarriage, they must recite *Little Houses* as soon as possible, addressing them to “Child of <full name of the mother>”. This is because the spirits of aborted or miscarried children are very pitiful; they are unable to go anywhere and remain stuck to bodies of family members, especially those of existing children. This tends to cause the children to get sick, perform poorly in school, or disobey their parents, etc. Hence, it is important to help the spirits of aborted or miscarried children ascend to a higher spiritual realm.
- In addition, you can include the following sutras and mantras in your daily recitation for your child:
 - Recite the ***Cundi Dharani*** 21, 27, 49 or 108 times per day, and sincerely pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva for protection and blessings for your child to be able to

advance in their studies, perform well in school, and pass exams successfully.

- If the child is difficult to discipline and tends to act against the will of their parents, you can recite the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** 21, 27 or 49 times per day to resolve the karmic conflicts between the parents and the child.
- The ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** should be included in cases where family members ate freshly killed creatures or seafood in the past, previously committed the karma of killing (animals), or if the mother ate too many freshly killed creatures during pregnancy. All of the above will have a negative impact on the child. You need to recite this mantra 21, 27 or 49 times per day to help the spirits of the deceased ascend to a higher spiritual realm.
- Furthermore, it would be even better if the children are able to perform recitations on their own. They can recite the ***Great Compassion Mantra***, the ***Heart Sutra*** (preferably during the daytime), and the ***Cundi Dharani***.
- In addition, parents can frequently take their children to perform life liberations and help them cultivate compassion from a young age. It is a blessing for a family to have a child who performs recitations and practises Buddhism from a young age.

115. Consuming vegetables in a non-vegetarian dish

Q: Dear Master Lu, I have made a vow to be a vegetarian. But

when we eat out, it is often inconvenient to find vegetarian food. Sometimes even a bowl of vegetable noodle soup would contain animal stock. Can I just eat the noodles and not drink the soup? Also, is it alright to eat the vegetables in a dish containing meat?

A:

- Strictly speaking, if you have made a vow to be a vegetarian, then you should not consume the vegetables in a meat dish. Furthermore, you should not consume any food that comes into contact with meat, seafood, or any of the five pungent spices.
- Under extreme circumstances when you have no choice but to consume those vegetables, you should say to Guan Yin Bodhisattva in your mind that you are consuming these vegetables because you have no choice, and you do not want to eat them at all.
- Most importantly, it is all about your intention. If, when you are consuming the vegetables in a meat dish, you find the vegetables to be tasty, or you even find yourself enjoying the taste of meat, then you are breaking your precepts. This means you have not been able to keep your vow. You need to recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 49 times and sincerely repent your wrongdoings, and then make a vow again that you will be a vegetarian.
- If you have made a vow, you must try your best to keep it. You should not look for any excuse for being unable to keep your vow. A precept means that you must refrain from doing what you should not do. You must have strong determination and observe your precepts.

- In addition, you should not consume fertilised eggs (i.e. eggs that can hatch). Quail eggs should also not be consumed as they are already fertilised.
- When you consume any medicine or health supplements that contain ingredients such as gelatine or fish oil, if your body does not reject the taste, then perhaps you have not reached the level where you are completely observing your precepts. However, it would still be best to avoid consuming such products as they contain animal by-products.

116. Interpersonal conflicts concerning debts and lawsuits

Q: Dear Master Lu, I lent a large amount of money to a friend and now we are experiencing conflicts. He refuses to return the money to me. What sutras and mantras should I recite? In addition, I have been involved in a lawsuit recently, how can I resolve this?

A:

- To a certain extent, interpersonal conflicts are the results of karmic conflicts from your previous lives. These conflicts can include someone's refusal to return the money they owed you, being involved in lawsuits, being oppressed by your boss, being alienated by your colleagues, or experiencing disagreements with your neighbour, etc. These conflicts can be resolved by reciting Buddhist scriptures.
- Firstly, you should sincerely and diligently perform your daily recitations, which must include the **Great Compassion Mantra** and the **Heart Sutra**. You should recite each of these

at least 7 times per day, the more the better.

- When your friend refuses to return the money owed to you or causes you trouble, he may be at fault. However, from a karmic perspective, it means that you owe him karmic debts from a past life. It is recommended that you recite the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** at least 49 times per day, and sincerely pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to help you resolve your karmic conflicts with him.

In addition, you should recite the ***Heart Sutra*** at least 7 times per day for him, and sincerely pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to protect and bless him (you should state his full name), and help him to gain wisdom so that he will not cause you trouble. At the same time, reciting the ***Heart Sutra*** will also help you repay your karmic debts to him as well as resolve your karmic conflicts with him.

- You should recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 3 to 5 times per day to repent the karmic obstacles causing your current difficulties.
- You can also recite the ***Cundi Dharani*** 49 times per day and sincerely pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to have your wishes fulfilled and help you get past your current difficulties soon.
- In addition, it is recommended that you recite one *Little House* every 2 to 3 days.
- For best results, you should also perform life liberations and make vows.

117. Being cursed by someone

Q: Dear Master Lu, I unintentionally offended someone, and he

has put a curse on me to make my life miserable. Could you please advise me on how to resolve this situation?

A:

- As Buddhists who perform recitations, we do not need to be afraid, as curses would not have much effect on us. However, the other party who put a curse on you will suffer major karmic retributions as it is a form of misconduct.
- As long as you perform recitations sincerely and diligently, and always maintain the right thoughts and a pure mind, you will not be affected by the curse. If you do not maintain the right thoughts and the right intentions, or if you have evil thoughts, then you will easily be affected by the curse.
- It is recommended that you continuously recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** every day whenever and wherever you can. You can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva help me to sincerely request Dharma Protectors to protect and bless me, <your full name>. I will diligently cultivate my mind, spread Buddhist teachings, and introduce Buddhism to others and help them achieve spiritual awakening.”
- If you have been cursed, you should recite the **Heart Sutra** 49 times per day and the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots** 108 times per day to resolve your karmic conflicts with the person who put a curse on you. Before you recite, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva bless me with compassion An unenlightened person holds a grudge against me due to a misunderstanding. May Guan Yin Bodhisattva please help me to resolve the karmic conflicts, so that

he/she will not create new negative karmic affinity against me any longer.” Persist in reciting the above for at least a month.

- It is also recommended that you recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 108 times. You may divide the recitation into several batches.

There must be reasons for someone to place a curse on you. You must have done something inappropriate to them as well. Hence you should sincerely repent of those actions.

- In addition, you should recite 69 *Little Houses* and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”. Putting a curse on you involves asking for help from spirits in the underworld. Once these spirits receive the *Little Houses*, some of the negative karmic affinities will be resolved, and they will not cause any more trouble for you.
- You also need to perform more meritorious deeds, help others more often, and help more people become spiritually awakened by learning Buddhism.

118. Heart disease

Q: Dear Master Lu, I have heart problems, which sutras and mantras should I recite?

A:

- Firstly, there are two main causes for heart disease:
- One type of heart disease is congenital, which is caused by karmic obstacles. Your karmic retributions for your wrongdoings in past lives can result in you being born into a family with a history of heart disease, or having heart

disorders from an early age, or experiencing a heart attack at a particular time.

- Alternatively, if you do not take good care of your heart, constantly have a bad temper and have high blood pressure, or if you have done many things against your conscience, you are also likely to have heart problems. When you do not maintain the right intentions or thoughts, your heart may be overstrained.
- People with heart problems need to be aware of the following:
 - First, you need to change your bad habits. Learn to be more tolerant and generous, and to have an open mind. A person who does not easily lose their temper tends to have a healthy heart.
 - Learn to be patient, as being impatient would also affect the condition of your heart.
 - Perform more recitations of the **Heart Sutra**, as reciting this will help calm your heart. When you recite the **Heart Sutra**, you would receive blessings from Guan Yin Bodhisattva and your heart would be at ease.
 - It is recommended that you recite the **Heart Sutra** 21 times per day. For people with heart disease, it is best to recite 49 times per day. In doing so, your heart will gradually open up and your mind will broaden itself.
- In addition, you should also note that:
 - If you have heart problems, you need to control your temper.
 - It is best to avoid consuming spicy food, as it would put a burden on your heart.

- You should relax. Gazing at the image of Guan Yin Bodhisattva is also beneficial as this will allow the light of Guan Yin Bodhisattva to shine into your heart.
- Below is the recommended daily recitation for people with heart problems:
 - Recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** at least 7 times per day. For severe conditions, 21 times or 49 times per day is recommended.
 - Recite the **Heart Sutra** at least 21 times, or 49 times per day.
 - Recite the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots** 29 times per day.
 - Recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** at least 3 times per day.
 - It is best to perform life liberations. Cultivating compassion and renouncing all attachments can lighten the burden on your heart
- Regardless of whether your heart problems are due to karmic obstacles from your previous lives, or from wrongdoings in your present life, you need to sincerely repent them so that you can gradually reduce the level of stress. Sincerely recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** to repent your wrongdoings and ask for forgiveness from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. As you rid your mind of burdens, you can achieve a higher spiritual level and broaden your perspective.
- You can also take “Danshen Pian” (salvia miltiorrhiza) tablets. They are helpful in preventing and treating heart disease.

119. Helping the deceased to ascend to a higher spiritual realm

Q: Dear Master Lu, since practising Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door, I have frequently dreamt about deceased people. Should I recite *Little Houses* for them one at a time, or should I recite for all of them simultaneously? Without knowing which realm the deceased person is in, how many *Little Houses* should I recite? May I recite *Little Houses* for the deceased whom I have not dreamt about?

A:

- If you dream about the deceased, it means they would like you to recite *Little Houses* for them. Generally, you need to recite 7 *Little Houses* for each of them. If the deceased are your family members, you should recite extra *Little Houses* for them so that they can ascend to a higher spiritual realm, such as heaven. This is one way to show filial piety, which is the foremost of all virtues.
- When you recite *Little Houses* to help the spirit of the deceased ascend to a higher realm, generally you need to recite 21 *Little Houses* for the deceased to proceed to the next higher realm; specifically, from the underworld to the human realm, then to the *Asura* realm, and then to heaven. However, in most cases, 21 *Little Houses* are not enough, as it also depends on the spiritual power of the reciter, the karma of the deceased, etc.
- Generally, you can determine which realm the deceased is in based on your dreams. If they appear in your dream in a dark environment that gives you a bad feeling, then they are

likely to be in the underworld.

If, in your dream, the environment is very bright, the deceased has a pleasant appearance and you feel that they are happy, then they are likely to be in heaven.

If the deceased is not wearing clothes in your dream and the scenes are frightening, then it is likely that they are in hell. People who had a sudden death, or committed suicide, are likely to be in this realm.

If the deceased is in hell, it tends to be very difficult to help them ascend to a higher realm. You can start with 49 *Little Houses* for the first batch and see if they are able to leave hell.

- Under normal circumstances, it is best to help the spirits of the deceased ascend to a higher realm one at a time. When you start reciting *Little Houses* for this purpose, it is recommended that you perform it in a continuous manner and do not stop. There was once a deceased person who was in the underworld. His family member stopped reciting *Little Houses* for him after having completed a few. The deceased person was then reborn into the human realm, not being able to ascend to heaven.

During the process, if you are unable to finish the *Little Houses* in time due to unforeseen circumstances, or if you dream that the deceased person is going to be reborn into the human realm soon, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless <full name of the deceased>. I, <your full name>, will keep reciting more *Little Houses* for <full name of the deceased> so that <full name of

the deceased> can ascend to a higher spiritual realm.”

- If you dream about several deceased people at the same time, you should recite *Little Houses* for all of them at the same time. For example, you can recite one *Little House* for Jennifer, and one for John, etc. Note that you should waste no time and complete the *Little Houses* quickly. If, in your dream, a deceased person passes away again, that means they are going to be reborn into the human realm soon.
- For the deceased people whom you have not dreamt about, it is possible that they have already been reborn into the human realm or other realms. In this case, the *Little Houses* that you have recited for them would be stored in the underworld. These *Little Houses* can be used when they pass away again in their present life, or if they become ill and fall into a coma.

Another possibility is that the affinity between you and them is not strong enough. Once you have paid off your karmic debts to them, they will no longer visit you in your dreams.

- If you are unable to call into Master Lu’s radio program for a Totem Reading to find out the exact number of *Little Houses* you need to recite for the deceased person, then you can recite 21 *Little Houses* first to be safe. If you still do not dream about the deceased, then you should stop reciting *Little Houses* for them for the time being. If they do visit you in your dreams, then you can determine which realm they are currently in based upon your dream.

120. Symptoms experienced while performing recitations

Q: Dear Master Lu, when I perform recitations, I sometimes burp, sneeze, get teary, yawn, feel tingling on the scalp, or feel tired and sleepy, etc. What are the causes?

A:

- While you are performing recitations, it is fine if you experience the following: burping, sneezing, itchiness on the nose, and passing wind, etc. These are normal reactions as a result of the flow of your energy field.
- If you yawn while you are performing recitations, it is likely that foreign spirits have come to occupy your body, or Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are visiting.
- If you get teary-eyed while you are performing recitations, it is an expression of your compassion and means that you are connecting with the energy field of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. However, this is not valid if your eyes are watering because of yawning.
- If you feel tingling on your scalp while you are performing recitations, and if you also feel cold and shiver, then that means your karmic creditor is asking you to repay karmic debts and you need to recite *Little Houses*.
- On the other hand, if you feel pulsing between your eyebrows, warmth throughout your body, and tingling on the soles of your feet, then these are good signals indicating the successful removal of blockages in your meridians (energy pathways).
- If you feel sleepy while performing recitations:

- Your body may just be exhausted. In this case, it is best not to perform recitations, because the effectiveness would be reduced. You can continue reciting after you have had a rest.
- If you experience sleepiness only when you recite a particular sutra or mantra, then it may indicate that your recitation of that sutra or mantra is relatively good. As you perform recitations, it is like recharging your body—you take in the positive energy, and you feel relaxed and comfortable. This can also cause sleepiness.
- If you experience sleepiness when you recite the **Heart Sutra** or the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra**, then you should be cautious. It would be best for you to recite them during the daytime or on a sunny day when *Yang* energy is strong.
- In addition to sleepiness, if you also experience headaches or dizziness, then it indicates that there are karmic creditors occupying your body.
- If you do not have any of the symptoms described above, yet you still feel sleepy as soon as you start performing recitations, then you should use your willpower to persist with your recitations, fight against your sleepiness, and practise Buddhism diligently.

121. Burial site selection and burial ritual

Q: Dear Master Lu, my parents are currently selecting a burial site for themselves. What should we be aware of? As for the

burial ritual in the future, what should we be aware of?

A:

- When you are still alive, it is best not to rush into such matters, including the selection of burial sites or purchase of coffins.
- It is even worse if you have already selected your burial site or have engraved your names on the headstone. This is equivalent to registering your name in the underworld in advance.
- For a couple, both husband and wife are brought together by a shared affinity. They may choose to share one burial site after they pass away. They can also be buried at different sites.
- When the elders of a family pass away, names of the younger family members should not be engraved on the headstone. Generally, you should just write, “Offered by the family”.
- Eight hours after the passing of the family member, you can begin planning for the funeral. As long as the entire body remains intact, either burial or cremation is fine. In the case of cremation, the cremation urn should also be buried in the earth. The body of the deceased must not be dismembered with parts being buried in separate places.
- Cremated ashes of the deceased should not be scattered into streams, rivers, lakes, or over the ocean. If the parts of the body or ashes are in separate places, the soul of the deceased will become scattered and incomplete, making it difficult for the deceased to ascend to heaven.
- It is best to have the deceased (or the cremation urn of the

deceased) buried as soon as possible. Generally, you should pick odd-numbered dates for burials, and it is best if the date is odd according to both the lunar calendar and the Gregorian calendar. It would be best for the burial to take place at 8am, 10am, or 12pm.

- For the burial ritual, bring fresh fruit, a plate for the fruit, a small incense burner, three sticks of incense and a pair of red candles. If possible, bring along fresh flowers and the essentials for the burning of *Little Houses*.
- At the time of burial, first light the candles, then offer the incense. The burial may then commence. After offering incense, you should kneel and bow down in front of the deceased family member. This applies to both older and younger family members.
- Following the prostrations, you can burn *Little Houses* for the deceased and then pay your respect again. At the end of the ritual, blow out the candles. The candles can be taken home, but the fruit and flowers should be left behind.
- When burying the ashes of the deceased, you can say the following prayer “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva, Dharma Protectors, and all the spirits and deities have compassion on <full name of the deceased>. <full name of the deceased> is buried here. May all who have affinities with him/her take care of him/her.”

This way, any spirits from the surrounding burial sites in the cemetery who have affinities with the deceased will also take care of them. Existing spirits may give new spirits a hard time. This is why family members may dream about the

deceased asking to “move house” (i.e. have their resting place moved), because they are being hassled by neighbouring spirits at their resting place.

- At the burial, you can line the grave with red fabric with yellow silk fabric over it. Wrap the cremation urn with the yellow silk fabric and place the urn on top of the lining red fabric. In the case of a coffin, you can place the coffin on the top of the red fabric, then cover the coffin with the yellow fabric. Avoid using any silvery silk fabric, etc.
- If there are prayer beads previously used by the deceased, you can recite the **Heart Sutra** 7 times before wrapping these prayer beads in yellow fabric and placing them on top of the coffin or cremation urn. For unused prayer beads, you need to recite the **Heart Sutra** 7 times for each bead.
- You may also wrap up any photos of the deceased with red fabric and bury them with the deceased.
- Note that family members should refrain from crying loudly, wailing, or becoming extremely emotional. You should also refrain from mentioning the name of the deceased too often. Otherwise, the deceased may have difficulty in letting go, which will make it difficult for the deceased to ascend to a higher realm.
- Regarding burial options, it is best to perform an earth burial as it brings peace to the deceased.
- Cremation is also acceptable, as the complete body is still preserved. If the deceased is cremated, then the cremation urn should also be buried. It is not good to have the cremation urn in the home.
- If the parts of the body or ashes are in separate places, it

would make it difficult for the deceased to ascend to a higher realm.

- Ashes of the deceased should not be scattered into streams, rivers, lakes, or over the ocean, or else the soul of the deceased will become scattered and incomplete.
- Do not set up an altar to place the spirit tablets for the deceased in the home. This tends to attract foreign spirits to occupy the tablet, which will cause troubles within the family.
- Images of or tablets for the deceased should be wrapped with red coloured materials (e.g. red paper or red fabrics) and stored horizontally inside a drawer. On special occasions, such as the Ching Ming Festival, Winter Solstice, and the anniversary date of the deceased’s passing, you can take them out to pay your respects and burn *Little Houses*.
- For more information, refer to **Q&A 74: Performing recitations for family and friends on their deathbed.**

122. Performing recitations for self-cultivation

Q: Dear Master Lu, can we record the sutras and mantras that we recite for daily recitation and *Little Houses* on the *Self-Cultivation Record Form*⁴?

Could you please advise us on how we should store and use the sutras and mantras that we recite for self-cultivation purposes?

A:

⁴ See Appendix E: Sample *Self-Cultivation Record Form*

- Your daily recitation of Buddhist sutras and mantras, and your recitation of *Little Houses* or self-cultivation need to be performed separately.
- Daily recitations can be compared to your daily expenditure—you use it for the day. Performing recitations of *Little Houses* can be compared to paying your debts. Performing recitations for self-cultivation purposes is similar to saving for your pension. The merits and virtues that you accumulate from performing recitations will be stored in your records of merits and virtues.
- You can download and print the forms for self-cultivation on yellow paper. Unlike the *Little House*, which has a particular size and format requirement, the paper size does not matter for the *Self-Cultivation Record Form*.
- On the form, you can use a black or blue pen to write your name or the name of other recipient in the “Offer To” field, and write the name of the person performing the recitation in the “Recited by devotee” field.

If you have changed your name, it would be best to lodge the *Application for Change of Name* in front of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, and then use your new name. Please refer to

Q&A 2: Lodging the *Application for Change of Name*.

- Before you start your recitations, you can say the following prayer to Guan Yin Bodhisattva, stating that your recitations are for self-cultivation purposes: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, I am now reciting <title of the sutra or mantra> for self-cultivation purposes. May Guan Yin Bodhisattva be my witness.” Alternatively, you can also

say a general prayer, for example, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name, or the name written in the “Offer To” field>, grant me safety and harmony, or good health, etc.”

- Generally, avoid reciting the **Heart Sutra**, the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra** or the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** for self-cultivation purposes after midnight. After you have finished reciting a particular sutra or mantra once, you can put a red dot in the corresponding circle. Once you have completed the entire form, wrap it with a red paper or red fabric and store it in a safe place. The completion date can be left blank until the day of burning the form. The more *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* you can accumulate and store, the better. Also, avoid dotting the circles after midnight.
- The objective for storing *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* is that, when we are about to pass away, we can burn these forms to help us to ascend to a realm beyond the Three Realms (namely, the Realm of Desire, the Realm of Form and the Realm of Formless).
- During emergency situations, you can use these *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* for yourself or for others. For example, for major illnesses or before surgery, you can burn *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* of the **Great Compassion Mantra**. And prior to important exams, you can burn *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* of the **Great Compassion Mantra**, the **Heart Sutra** and the **Cundi Dharani**. Generally, it is best to burn them three or four days beforehand, instead of on

the day of the event.

If you are well prepared, you can start burning them a month prior to the event. You can burn one or two *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* each week.

- You can also transfer the recitations that you have performed for self-cultivation purposes onto *Little Houses*. For example, if you have recited the **Great Compassion Mantra** x times on a *Self-Cultivation Record Form*, then you can transfer your recitation to $x/27$ onto *Little Houses* (each *Little House* contains 27 recitations of the **Great Compassion Mantra**). After you have transferred the recitations, you can then fold the *Self-Cultivation Record Form* into a small piece, wrap it with paper and then discard it.
- Below are the sutras and mantras for which *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* are available: The **Great Compassion Mantra**, the **Heart Sutra**, the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance**, the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra**, the **Cundi Dharani**, the **Gong De Bao Shan Shen Zhou**, the **Amitabha Sutra** and the **Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou**.
- The recitation of the **Great Compassion Mantra** and the **Heart Sutra** enhances your fundamental spiritual power and allows you to open up your spiritual path forward.
- The recitation of the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** can be used to eliminate major karmic obstacles and prevent them from obstructing you.

For your daily recitation, you should recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** no more than 7 times per day. If you are to recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** for self-cultivation purposes, you can complete

3 more recitations. In other words, the total number of recitations of this Buddhist text in a day, including the part for your daily recitation, should not exceed 10.

For example, if you have recited the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 5 times as part of your daily recitation, you are still allowed to do 5 more recitations for self-cultivation purposes.

You can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>. I am now reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** for self-cultivation purposes.”

- As an analogy, suppose that the ***Great Compassion Mantra*** and the ***Heart Sutra*** were helium in a balloon, and karmic obstacles were metal bricks weighing down the balloon.

If a helium balloon has many metal bricks weighing it down, even if you continuously pump helium gas into it, the balloon will not be able to move upwards. It can only move upwards after the metal blocks are removed as these bricks are too heavy.

The recitation of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** is therefore very important. For a person who still has severe karmic obstacles at the time of passing away, burning many *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** in one sitting will help them repent and reduce many karmic obstacles. Thus, it would be easier for them to ascend to a higher spiritual realm.

Note that the *Self-Cultivation Record Form of the ***Eighty-****

Eight Buddhas Great Repentance is usually burnt when you are about to pass away. Avoid burning a large number of them on normal days, otherwise your karmic obstacles might be activated and transformed into a spirit, causing big trouble. In addition, on special days such as the 1st and 15th day of the lunar month, Buddha's birthday, etc., you may perform more recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***. However, if you are unable to complete the intended number, you may offer the *Self-Cultivation Record Form of the Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance* to make up for the difference. Please refer to **Q&A 161: Reciting the Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance on special days and Buddhist commemorative days.**

- The recitation of the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** is mainly for the small animals that you have eaten or killed during your lifetime. These minor karmic obstacles can be further eliminated through the recitation of this mantra.
- The recitation of the ***Cundi Dharani*** helps you to speed up your progress in your Buddhist practice and elevate your spiritual state.
- The recitation of the ***Gong De Bao Shan Shen Zhou*** helps you to consolidate the merits and virtues that you have accumulated in your lifetime. Only when you have enough merits and virtues can you ascend to heaven.
- If you would like to be reborn into the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, then the recitation of the ***Amitabha Sutra*** is similar to inviting Amitabha Buddha to come and lead you to the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. You will ultimately attain the unsurpassable, complete perfection.

- The recitation of the ***Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou*** helps you to eliminate disasters or misfortune before they occur. For example, when you dream about snakes or serpents, or dream about possible disasters or calamities ahead, you can burn a *Self-Cultivation Record Form of the Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou* to help eliminate these calamities.

If you burn the *Self-Cultivation Record Form* in the midst of such calamities, it will be less effective. The logic is as follows: Instead of putting out a fire when it has started, you should have taken preventive measures such as regularly keeping your house damp to avoid fires. Therefore, we should resolve problems before they arise or when we feel them approaching.

- Note that it is not suitable to recite the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** for self-cultivation purposes, as this mantra should be recited with a specific target in mind. Burning a large quantity all at once may invite trouble.
- The *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* of the ***Heart Sutra***, the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra***, and the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** can only be burnt when you have a Buddhist altar. You must offer incense and pay respect to Bodhisattvas at the altar before burning these *Self-Cultivation Record Forms*. If you do not have a Buddhist altar, you can go to a temple, make incense offerings and pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva before burning the *Self-Cultivation Record Forms*.

As for other types of *Self-Cultivation Record Forms*, even if you do not have a Buddhist altar, you can still burn them after you offer the “Heart Incense”.

- The process of burning *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* is the same as that of *Little Houses*. It is best to burn them in the daytime. If you must burn them in the evening, avoid doing so after midnight. However, the *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* of the **Heart Sutra** and the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra** must not be burnt at night.

123. Children falling in love at a young age

Q: Dear Master Lu, my son is in year 12 (the last year of high school). Recently, he has been frequently texting and calling a girl, and his suspicious behaviour suggests that this is not just a normal friendship. He will not listen to me, what should I do?

A:

- Firstly, parents should not interfere with their children's relationships, as each person has their own karmic affinities.
- However, if you are concerned about your children beginning a romantic relationship at too young an age, and you are concerned that their academic performance would be affected or that they would commit wrongdoings, then as parents you should still discipline them appropriately. You can recite Buddhist scriptures and pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to help you to curb your children's behaviour.
- To help your son, you can include the following sutras and mantras in the daily recitations that you perform for him:
 - The basic recitation should include the following: The **Great Compassion Mantra** 3 times per day, the **Heart Sutra** at least 7 times per day, and the **Eighty-Eight**

Buddhas Great Repentance twice per day.

- You can recite the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots** 21 times per day. Note that it is best to avoid reciting this mantra excessively. It is strongly recommended that you not try to change the predestined path of your children or forcefully separate a couple.
- You can recite the **Da Ji Xiang Tian Nü Zhou** 21 times per day. The **Da Ji Xiang Tian Nü Zhou** is for bringing good fortune and relationships. You can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless my son, <full name of your son>, so that he will have a good relationship.” A “good relationship” refers to a relationship that does not affect his academic performance or lead him down the wrong path. It could also refer to a relationship that is delayed until later in life.
- In addition, you can recite the **Cundi Dharani**, and pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to protect and bless your child so that he will perform well in his studies.

124. Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss

Q: Dear Master Lu, from your radio programs, it seems that the highest realm that a deceased person can reach as a result of performing recitations would be heaven. However, as Buddhist practitioners, we hope that we will be able to be reborn into the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.

We would like to ask, will practising Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door conflict with our goal of being reborn into the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss?

A:

First of all, regarding your question about helping the deceased to ascend to a higher spiritual realm:

- Some Buddhist practitioners following Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door have successfully helped their deceased family members ascend to the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. However, these are very rare cases. To achieve this goal, it not only requires a large quantity of *Little Houses*, but it also depends on the quantity of karmic obstacles this person has, as well as the spiritual level they have achieved in this lifetime.
- Firstly, they must be very kind and benevolent, and had not committed wrongdoings in their lives. In other words, they must have a good foundation for attaining Buddhahood. Secondly, their thoughts are also very important. For example, while they are still alive, or just before they pass away, if they are determined and say, “I want to be reborn into the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss,” then it would be possible for them to get there.
- You can recite *Little Houses* for this person to increase their spiritual power. Together with the compassion of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, even if this person has already passed away, you can still help them to be reborn into the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.
- However, many deceased people have a great deal of karmic obstacles because they did not know how to perform

recitations and cultivate their minds in the past. Even if you recite a large quantity of *Little Houses* for them, the best you could do is to help them to ascend to heaven. This is the highest realm that they can go.

If you would like to be reborn into the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss:

- In fact, all Dharma Doors (approaches) are the same, as they all teach us to cultivate our minds and to eliminate karmic obstacles so that we would be able to ascend to heaven.
- However, one should note that the foundation for cultivating our minds is very important. We are just ordinary human beings, and we carry with us many karmic obstacles, as well as ignorance and bad habits accumulated from numerous past lives. Hence, if we would like to be reborn into the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, we must first cultivate and purify our bodies and minds. This can be achieved by cultivating our minds, changing our behaviours, reciting Buddhist scriptures, and performing meritorious deeds.

It is said that we can carry along our karma and be reborn into the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. However, this karma must be insignificant. It does not mean that we can carry all our negative karma along with us. The karma here refers to the minor karmic obstacles that still remain after we have cultivated our minds and practised Buddhism. In other words, they refer to the old karmic obstacles that were generated in the past, not the new ones generated recently. It is the stain that is left behind during the process of eliminating our past karma. This stain results from previous

karmic obstacles that have not been completely eliminated. As an analogy, you wrote something on a piece of paper, and then you erase what you had written. The remaining karma that we are able to carry along with us when we are reborn into the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss can be likened to the remaining stain on this piece of paper. It does not mean that we can continuously generate new negative karma until the day we pass away or after we have become spiritually awakened and started learning Buddhism. Only when we stop generating new karma, and have eliminated past karma, and by continuously reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha in our minds, or by reciting the **Amitabha Sutra** during the period before we pass away, can we be reborn into the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.

- Master Lu has been teaching us that, when our foundation is not yet strong, our karmic obstacles are still high in quantity, and there are still many karmic creditors, we need to first eliminate our own afflictions and karmic obstacles through cultivation. Only then can we pray to be reborn into the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Imagine a person suffering from dementia or Ménière's disease, falling into a coma from a stroke and lying in a hospital bed with tubes attached to their bodies; they only have limited consciousness. How can they recite the name of Amitabha Buddha before their passing and expect to be reborn into the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss? It would be impossible.

- This is why Master Lu always teaches us to eradicate our worldly afflictions:

If we can eliminate our karmic obstacles, perform recitations to help karmic creditors ascend to a higher spiritual realm, improve our spiritual level, and purify our body and mind, then we can be reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss by reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha when we reach the end of life. This is the fundamental foundation for our true nature.

Therefore, the practice of Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door has no conflict with the aspiration of being reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. It only emphasizes the need for us to rid our bodies and minds of karmic obstacles before we can be reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss,

- In fact, the ultimate goal for Master Lu is to help everyone to transcend the cycle of rebirth within the six realms of existence. Therefore, the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss is also one of the destinations that Master Lu hopes that all of us can reach through cultivation.
- Guan Yin Bodhisattva is one of the Three Saints of the Western Pure Land. We can cultivate our minds and practise Buddhism under Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door. When we have attained the perfect state of spiritual awakening, and wish to be reborn into the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, not only Guan Yin Bodhisattva but also Amitabha Buddha will come and lead us.

125. Performing recitations at hospitals

Q: Dear Master Lu, I am taking care of a family member who is

currently in hospital. I heard that it is not recommended to perform recitations at hospitals. In that case, what is your advice on performing our own daily recitations, the patient's daily recitations, and the recitation of *Little Houses*? Does this mean that hospital staff should not perform recitations at work?

A:

- For patients, it is best to ceaselessly recite the **Great Compassion Mantra**. Since patients are physically weak, they should only recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** and avoid reciting the **Heart Sutra** or the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra**. If they have to recite *Little Houses* in a hospital as they need them and no one can help recite them on their behalf, then recite them only during the daytime.
- If you are a caregiver or a hospital staff member, you can perform your daily recitation as well as the recitation of *Little Houses*. However, it is best to avoid reciting the **Heart Sutra** and the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra**. If you must recite them, do so only in fine weather during the daytime. In addition, you should perform more recitations of the **Great Compassion Mantra** to protect yourself. You should also recite more *Little Houses* for your own karmic creditors.
- The *Yin* energy in hospitals is relatively strong, and the energy field is complex. Therefore, whether you are a hospital staff member, a patient or a caregiver, you should complete more recitations of the **Great Compassion Mantra**, and diligently recite *Little Houses*.
- Generally, avoid reciting *Little Houses* at the hospital. If it is not possible for you to leave the hospital and you can only

recite and dot the *Little Houses* in the hospital, you must ensure that you fill in the “Offer to” field on the right-hand side of the *Little House* before commencing your recitations. Recite *Little Houses* only during the daytime.

- If you are a caregiver of a patient in the hospital, you can fill in the “Offer to” field on the right-hand side of the *Little House* at home first. While in the hospital, keep track of the recitations of the sutra/mantra that you have completed during the day. Put the red dots on the *Little Houses* later when you get home.

126. Transcribing and burning scriptures

Q: Dear Master Lu, a fellow Buddhist practitioner told me that transcribing sutras can help eliminate our karmic obstacles. I have even burnt a portion of the sutra. Now that I am following Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door, I would not think about burning sutra booklets again. What should I do with the sutras that I transcribed in the past?

A:

- The practice of transcribing sutras itself is fine. However, it is not encouraged because if you make a mistake, or if you have unwholesome thoughts during the process of transcribing, then it would be disrespectful to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- For the sutras that you have transcribed, you should never burn them. You can wrap the sutra booklet with red paper or fabric, and store it aside for 6 months to a year. You can

then recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 7 times before you dispose of them.

- If you have already burnt the sutra booklets and constantly feel guilty about it, then it means that negative karma has been stored in your eighth consciousness, and you will undergo karmic retributions. You must recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 21 times to repent. If you do not have any special feelings or you do not feel guilty about it, then it is fine. However, you must never burn sutra booklets again.

127. Disciplining misbehaved children

Q: Dear Master Lu, my child is very disobedient. My child does not listen to me, no matter what I say or how I say it. What should I do?

A:

- There are many possible reasons for children to misbehave.
- First, you should not use an adult's way of thinking to restrain the innocent and playful nature of children.
- Generally, if a child does not like to study or listen to you, you can recite the ***Heart Sutra*** for the child and pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to grant the child wisdom.
- If a child is having conflicts with their parents or family members, it may be due to karmic conflicts from previous lives, or the child may have come to collect karmic debts from the parents. Therefore, you need to recite the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots***.

- Another plausible reason is that there are karmic creditors (could be the spirit of the mother’s aborted or miscarried baby) occupying the child’s body. If that is the case, you need to recite *Little Houses*.

128. Performing recitations for people with dementia

Q: Dear Master Lu, one of my family members has been diagnosed with dementia, what sutras and mantras should we recite?

A:

- Dementia is a physical illness caused by spirits and karmic obstacles. Generally, it cannot be completely cured by modern medical science. We must learn to use the Three Golden Buddhist Practices well to help those suffering from dementia. The Three Golden Buddhist Practices, namely performing recitations, performing life liberations, and making vows, are bestowed upon us by Guan Yin Bodhisattva.
- It is recommended that you recite the following as part of your daily recitation for the family member with dementia: The ***Great Compassion Mantra*** 21 times, ***Heart Sutra*** 49 times, and the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 5 times.
- Dementia is to a large extent related to the karma of killing (animals). If the patient or family members killed or ate too many freshly killed animals in the past, then they should include the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** in their

daily recitation. Recite this mantra 21 or 49 times per day.

- It is best if you can recite and burn at least 3 *Little Houses* per week. Generally, for this type of illness, you can recite 49 *Little Houses* for the first batch, followed by 7 *Little Houses* for every subsequent batch until the patient has fully recovered.
- Meanwhile, you should also make vows and perform life liberations.

129. Homosexuality

Q: Dear Master Lu, I was born homosexual. I heard that people who are homosexual will end up in hell, and I am very worried. I really wish that I could live as a heterosexual person, but I can't, and I feel miserable. Master Lu, please advise me as to what I should do.

A:

- From a Buddhist perspective, homosexual relationships are not encouraged.
- Generally, homosexuality is due to strong karmic ties formed from previous lives. In addition, because the mark left behind from previous lives is too strong, they may still be thinking about their previous gender in their present life. This is in fact a form of punishment for their souls.
- The following sutras and mantras can be included in your daily recitation:
- If your personality matches your gender, then you can recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times, the **Heart Sutra** 49 times, the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 3 times,

the ***Cundi Dharani*** 49 times, the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** 49 times, the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** 49 times, and the ***Ru Yi Bao Lun Wang Tuo Luo Ni*** 49 times.

- If a homosexual male has more feminine-inclined traits, he can perform more recitations of the ***Great Compassion Mantra***, to increase his *Yang* energy so that he can be more masculine.
- If a homosexual female has more masculine-inclined traits, then she can complete more recitations of the ***Heart Sutra***.
- In addition, you can recite the ***Guan Yin Ling Gan Zhen Yan*** 49 times per day. You can pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to help you change your personality, making it aligned with your gender.
- In addition, it is recommended that you recite *Little Houses*, make vows, and perform life liberations. You can recite 2 to 3 *Little Houses* per week, with 49 *Little Houses* for the first batch.
- By continuously performing recitations and cultivating your mind, you will attain a clear understanding of yourself and realise your true nature. While you gradually repay your karmic debts and eliminate karmic obstacles, you will be able to fulfil your wish.

130. Repairing or relocating the burial sites of ancestors

Q: Dear Master Lu, the burial sites of our ancestors are in a bad state of disrepair since we have not maintained them for years. We would like to repair or relocate them. What should we do?

A:

- Generally, it is best not to relocate burial sites. But you can repair the headstones instead.
- Before you begin the repair work, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, so that my deceased family member will not be upset. On <the date> I will repair the burial site of <full name of the deceased >, as an act of filial piety, please protect and bless me.”

Before you visit the burial site and commence the repairs, you should recite the following sutras and mantras as soon as possible (repeat the above prayer before you recite):

- The ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 49 times;
- The ***Great Compassion Mantra*** 7 times;
- The ***Heart Sutra*** 7 times;
- The ***Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou*** 49 times;
- The ***Ru Yi Bao Lun Wang Tuo Luo Ni*** 49 times;
- *7 Little Houses* for the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>” and *21 Little Houses* for <full name of the deceased>. You should burn these *Little Houses* before you visit the burial site.
- If you have no choice but to relocate the burial site, generally it is better to do so in the morning on a sunny day. You should recite *21 Little Houses* and address them to <full name of the deceased>. You can burn them in advance or on the day of the relocation. Also recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 49 times.
- On the day of relocation, you can offer three incense sticks

at the original burial site, followed by the burning of the *Little Houses*. Then you can relocate the burial site.

During the process of relocation, you can continuously recite the ***Great Compassion Mantra*** and the ***Heart Sutra*** at the original site (but you should not recite the ***Heart Sutra*** at the burial site if you have not made the incense offering). While you recite the ***Great Compassion Mantra***, you must not have any disrespectful or defensive thoughts. It is best to empty your mind of any thoughts.

- On the way from the original burial site to the new burial site, you should only recite the ***Great Compassion Mantra***.
- Once you have arrived at the new burial site, you can first offer three incense sticks, followed by continuous recitation of the ***Great Compassion Mantra*** and the ***Heart Sutra***, before proceeding with the burial service.

131. Welcoming the Bodhisattva of Wealth during Chinese New Year

Q: Today is the fifth day of the Chinese New Year. How do we welcome the Bodhisattva of Wealth? What sutras and mantras should we recite?

A:

- Master Lu mentioned the following during one of his Dharma talks: On the fifth day of the Chinese New Year, keep in mind that we should not openly state that our wish is to become wealthy. Many people make incense offerings and pray for wealth on the fifth day of the Chinese New Year, but are unable to have their wish fulfilled. It is because they have

said their wishes out loud. Many people like to talk about the good deeds that they have done. For example, “I have helped many poor people”, “I have donated such and such amount of money”, or “I have made such and such contributions”, etc. It is best to refrain from doing so. On the fifth day of the Chinese New Year when the Bodhisattva of Wealth is visiting us, avoid saying things such as, “I want to get rich.” If you say this, then it is very likely that your wish to become rich would not be fulfilled.

Master Lu hopes that everyone will be truly well, not just to become wealthy. Ultimately, money cannot bring us happiness. Many people are very wealthy, but they are not happy. A truly wise person would pray for peace and safety. There is a Chinese saying: “Being safe and well itself is a blessing.” We should not be greedy. Once a person becomes greedy, they will experience sorrow, poverty and suffering. As Buddhists, we should not be greedy.

- Generally, during the daytime on the fifth day of the Chinese New Year, you can recite the **Cundi Dharani** 108 times and the **Heart Sutra** 21 times. Before you recite, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva and the Bodhisattva of Wealth protect and bless me, <your full name>, so that I will have a smooth career and improved financial situation.”
- You can also say the following prayer: “May the Bodhisattva of Wealth protect and bless me, <your full name>, so that I will have a smooth career and improved financial situation.” You can then recite the four types of sutras and mantras included in the *Little House* (namely, the **Great Compassion**

Mantra, the **Heart Sutra**, the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra** and the **Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan**). The number of recitations for each sutra and mantra can be the same as that of the *Little House*. But you do not have to fill out or burn the *Little House*.

- However, as people attain different levels of spiritual practice, their wishes will also vary. If you are still praying for wealth, and blessings in the human and heaven realms, you could also recite and offer 7 to 21 *Little Houses* to the Bodhisattva of Wealth, and address them to the “Bodhisattva of Wealth”
- In addition, it is best if you can vow to practise the giving of money. This will help your prayers to the Bodhisattva of Wealth to be more effective.

132. Great Compassion Water

Q: May I ask what Great Compassion Water is? Can I recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** to a bowl of water to perform the blessing by myself? Or is it that only the water that has been offered to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas can be called the Great Compassion Water?

A:

- Great Compassion Water is the water that you have offered to Guan Yin Bodhisattva. It has been blessed by Guan Yin Bodhisattva. As ordinary practitioners, we are unable to bless the water simply by performing recitations, making it become the Great Compassion Water.
- You can offer hot or cold water that has previously been

boiled, mineral water, purified water or any other drinkable water that has no taste, no colour and no odour. You should not directly use tap water or untreated water.

- Use a brand-new cup for making water offerings for the Great Compassion Water. The cup can be made of glass, china or ceramic. It can be with or without a lid, but it is better to have a lid to prevent dust and insects from falling into the cup. It is best to use a plain white cup without any text on it. Avoid having the texts of the **Great Compassion Mantra** or the **Heart Sutra**, etc. printed on the surface. You are also advised against using cups with names or images of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas or any animal figures.
- Normally, there should be one cup of water placed in front of each Buddha or Bodhisattva. Offering more than one cup of water before each Buddha or Bodhisattva is also acceptable. But there should never be fewer cups than the number of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas on the altar. The cup should not be too large. In addition, bottled mineral water should not be directly placed in front of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas; it is disrespectful to substitute the cup of water with a bottle of mineral water. In most cases, do not place bottled water together with cups of water on the altar.
- You should not drink the Great Compassion Water directly from the cup used for offering on the altar. The water should be poured into another cup for drinking. Your mouth should not touch the offering cup.

As a general practice, you can first face the statues and images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, with both hands holding the cup, then respectfully raise the cup slightly

above your eyebrows, and say the following prayer gently: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, grant me good health.” At the same time, you can visualise that the pure water of Guan Yin Bodhisattva is gradually being poured onto the top of your head, and then flowing over your entire body.

You can then pour the water into another container, and drink it respectfully. For best results, you can place your hand facing down over the cup and recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** once before drinking the water.

- If the Great Compassion water is too cold to drink, you can warm it up by pouring it into another container, and immersing it in hot water for a while. Do not heat up the blessed water directly or using the microwave (it should only be warmed up slightly rather than heated to its boiling point).
- For the water offered to other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, you can just pour it away. Otherwise, you need to recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** once before drinking. In addition, water offered to different Buddhas and Bodhisattvas should not be mixed together. You should pour the water into different cups before drinking. Moreover, any water after being offered should not be used for watering plants.

133. How to help a deceased pet ascend to a higher realm

Q: Dear Master Lu, we have a pet at home. When it passes

away, how do we help the spirit of the pet to ascend to a higher spiritual realm?

A:

- Generally, to help the spirits of dead animals ascend to a higher spiritual realm, you can recite the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra***. For example, recite the mantra 49 times for a cat or a dog, or 108 times for a turtle. It would certainly be better if you can complete more recitations of the mantra.
- You can also recite *Little Houses* to help the spirits of the deceased pet ascend to a higher spiritual realm. The *Little Houses* can be addressed to “Dog <full name of the pet>” or “Cat <full name of the pet>”. Generally, you can recite 3 to 4 *Little Houses* for each pet. If you recite a large quantity of *Little Houses* for animals such as dogs, cows, etc., it is possible for them to be reborn into the human realm. However, it is unlikely for animals such as birds or goldfish to be reborn into the human realm.
- If your deceased pets visit you in your dreams, this is a sign that they are asking you to perform recitations for them. You can then recite 2 to 4 *Little Houses* and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”.
- If your pets become ill, you can perform recitations or even recite *Little Houses* for them. For example, if your dog becomes ill, you can address the *Little Houses* to the “Karmic Creditor of Dog <full name of the pet>”.

Avoid praying for an extension of your pet’s lifespan. Instead of keeping your pet in the animal realm, it would be better if you can help your pet to eliminate its karmic obstacles so

that it will not be reborn as an animal again. If you are determined to help your pet, you can recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** and *Little Houses* for it, helping it to eliminate its karmic obstacles. When your pet passes way, it would be more likely for your pet to be reborn into a better spiritual realm.

- It is recommended that we refrain from keeping pets at home. As humans and animals do not belong to the same realm, our energy fields would be affected. However, it is fine to keep goldfish, as they can help to harmonise the *Feng-shui* in your home and to accumulate wealth. The fish tank could be placed on the right-hand side as you enter the main door. You should keep 6 goldfish that are gold or red in colour.
- If you already have a large number of pets, you may give them to others if possible. If you are unable to give them away, then you should continue to keep them until the end of their lives, as they also have karmic affinities with you.

134. Giving gifts

Q: Dear Master Lu, when we give gifts during festive seasons or special occasions, what should we be aware of?

A:

- Shoes should not be given as gifts. In Chinese, “shoes” sounds similar to “deviant”, and therefore the sound is deemed to be inauspicious. In addition, you should be aware of the following points of attention regarding shoes:
 - Avoid wearing shoes that have previously been worn by

others.

- Avoid wearing white, red or yellow shoes.
- Avoid wearing high heels if you wish to conceive. When wearing high heels, your feet are not connected to the ground, making you not “well-grounded”, thus you are likely to be physically unwell.
- The shoe cabinet should always be closed and be kept clean and tidy. Otherwise, it may affect the energy field in the home.
- If your shoes are placed pointing inwards, then the negative energy will go inwards; if your shoes are pointing outwards, then the negative energy will go outwards.
- It is best to place the doormat outside. As you enter the door, you can step on the doormat a few times to leave the negative energy outside your home.
- Seeing shoes in the dream is generally not a good sign. It usually predicts misfortune or trouble. You should then include the ***Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou*** in your daily recitation. It could also be related to interpersonal conflicts. In this case, you should recite the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots***, and continue to recite *Little Houses* for your karmic creditors.
- Clocks should not be given as gifts. In Chinese, “giving a clock” sounds similar to “bidding the final farewell to a deceased person in a funeral”.
- Clocks represent the boundary of the *Yin* world and the *Yang* world. As one hour passes, the bells ring and this hour is gone forever, never to return. It is equivalent to the

reduction of one's lifespan. For a similar reason, the celebration of birthdays is not encouraged.

- It is best to avoid having a clock hung on the wall or a large clock that is visible upon entering the main door. It is also not recommended to have a hanging clock in the bedroom. If you must have a hanging clock in your home, you should place it in the kitchen.
- Seeing a clock in the dream is generally not a good sign, as it means that time is running out. You should increase the number of recitations for your daily recitation and *Little Houses*. In addition, you should make vows and perform life liberations.
- Items such as scissors, knives, etc. that are used for cutting or breaking things apart should also not be given as gifts.
- If you dream about someone giving you scissors or knives, it means that you may experience break-ups in your relationships.
- It is also not recommended to give nail clippers.
- For red packets, it is best to have round numbers, for example, \$10, \$20, \$30, etc.

135. Purchasing a new car

Q: Dear Master Lu, what should we be aware of when we purchase a new car?

A:

- It is best to avoid selecting silver for the colour of your car, as silver is the colour of the underworld and tends to attract foreign spirits. The probability for accidents is higher for

silver cars.

- Red is also not recommended. Sometimes, without the protection and blessings of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, red cars may bring you trouble and obstacles. This is similar to the fact that red lights represent alarms and warnings.
- For Buddhist practitioners, the choice of colour is for reference only. Most importantly, you should perform recitations diligently.
- After you have purchased a car, it is a good idea to play the **Great Compassion Mantra** at a low volume inside your car.
- You can also place a small image of the Buddha or Bodhisattva that has been blessed by Master Lu inside the car. However, you should fix it into position instead of letting them dangle in the car. Place the image facing inwards in the car so that the driver and passengers can see the image of the Buddha or Bodhisattva.
- It is not recommended to hang any bells in the car, as the sound of bells can easily attract foreign spirits.
- If there are foreign spirits occupying the car, you can recite *4 Little Houses* and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of the car of <full name of the driver>”.

136. Birthday celebrations

Q: Dear Master Lu, what should we be aware of during birthday celebrations?

A:

- Birthday celebrations for a living person should be based on

the Gregorian calendar rather than the lunar calendar.

- On your birthday, you must not perform any acts of killing (animals), as the resulting negative karma generated would be doubled on your birthday. If anyone consumes freshly killed animals during your birthday celebration, then all the negative karma from the killings are counted as yours.
- It is best to adopt a vegetarian diet on your birthday. If you can perform life liberations, it would be even better.
- In addition, it is recommended that you perform more recitations and recite more *Little Houses* on your birthday.
- Avoid lighting or blowing out candles. Lighting candles is tantamount to informing the underworld that one year has been deducted from your lifespan.

137. Keeping records

Q: Dear Master Lu, is it okay to have a habit of keeping records in daily life? For example, tracking daily expenses, the number of fish released for life liberations, and the number of *Little Houses* recited, etc.

A:

- It is best not to keep records, as the ancient Chinese saying goes, “The more records you keep, the poorer you get.”
- Records of life liberations should also not be kept. After you have released the fish, you can state the number to Guan Yin Bodhisattva by saying, “The Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva, I, <full name>, have released <number of or weight of> fish.” You should not think about it anymore once you have finished releasing the

fish. It is best to practise acts of “formless generosity” (i.e. not attached to the good deeds you have done).

- You can temporarily record the number of *Little Houses* that you are reciting for a period of time. For example, if you are reciting 49 *Little Houses* for the first batch, you can record the numbers until you have finished this batch. Afterwards, you should tear and discard the record. It is best not to keep the record for an extended period of time.
- Once you write something down, it becomes evidence. Everything you write is linked to the underworld. Therefore, you should not keep a diary. Typing on a computer is also considered to be writing. However, once you have deleted the files from the computer or torn up the piece of paper, then the records do not exist anymore.
- You should never burn your diary. As soon as you burn your diary, the underworld will know the contents immediately.

138. Photographing statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

Q: Dear Master Lu, we would like to invite an image of Guan Yin Bodhisattva to our home. Can we take a photo of the statue of Guan Yin Bodhisattva in a temple, and then print the image and pray at home?

A:

- It is best not to photograph any statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. You can invite the image of Guan

Yin Bodhisattva from the Guan Yin Citta Centre⁵ onto the altar in your home.

- If you must take a photograph, you should first make an incense offering and sincerely pray to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for permission. You can then recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times, the **Heart Sutra** 7 times, and the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 7 times. Wait until the incense has finished burning before you begin to take the photograph. Photographs should not be taken while the incense is still burning, as this is very disrespectful to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- When the incense curls, or when the wick of your oil lamp forms the shape of a lotus, it suggests that a Bodhisattva is visiting. At that moment, if you would like to take photographs to share it with others to introduce Buddhism to them, it is best not to take the photograph directly as it is disrespectful to take photos when Bodhisattvas are present. If you want to take a photo when the incense curls, you should put out the oil lamp before doing so. If you would like to take a photo of the wick of the oil lamp that forms the shape of a lotus, you must say the following prayer beforehand: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva bless me with your compassion, I, <your full name>, would like to use this photo to introduce Buddhism to more people, so that they can develop faith in Buddhism.” After saying the above, it would be alright to take the photo.

⁵ If you would like to invite the images of Bodhisattvas that we have, please contact Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door Secretariat at <richardlujunhong@sina.com>.

- It is best not to take photographs of yourself with statues or images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, or with Dharma instruments. This would also be disrespectful.
- Furthermore, avoid taking photographs frequently. In particular, avoid using a flash when taking photographs of children. Taking photographs too frequently will cause one's soul and spirit to separate, be scattered and incomplete.

139. Age and predestined calamities

Q: Dear Master Lu, at what ages do we experience predestined hardships or calamities? Does this apply to everyone?

A:

- In general, we experience predestined hardships or even calamities when the last digit of our age ends with a 3, 6 or 9. For example, when we reach 19, 29, 33, 39, 49, 59, 66, 73, and 89, etc. People also experience predestined calamities at age 84.
- Conditions vary for each individual, and therefore this cannot be generalised for everyone. However, we should be extra cautious when we reach any of the ages mentioned above.
- All ages are according to the Gregorian calendar. For example, if you were born on 1 January 1993, then you turn 19 on 1 January 2012.
- When you experience major predestined calamities in life, you should do more recitations of the ***Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou***. In general, you will need to recite the ***Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou*** 49 times per day.

- Generally, when the last digit of your age ends with 3, 6 or 9, you can begin reciting three batches of the ***Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou*** every day three months prior to your birthday, with each batch ranging from 49 to 108 times. One batch can be included as part of your daily recitation, while the other two can be recorded on a *Self-Cultivation Record Form*. You can record the number of the ***Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou*** that you have recited on the *Self-Cultivation Record Form* containing 272 circles. These *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* can be reserved for future use. For example, you can burn them altogether, along with *Little Houses*, on your birthday, and pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to help resolve your predestined calamities and eliminate disasters.

- Meanwhile, you should make a vow stating that you will recite one batch of *Little Houses* with the same quantity as the number of your age. For example, you should vow to recite at least 33 *Little Houses* when you are reaching age 33; if you are 21 years old or under and encounter a year of predestined calamities, you should vow to recite 21 *Little Houses*. You can say the following prayer before your recitation: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to resolve my predestined calamities at <age>”.

It is best to begin to recite and burn the promised *Little Houses* three months prior to your birthday and complete this process on the day of your birthday. For major or severe predestined calamities, sometimes the number of *Little*

Houses mentioned above is far from adequate. You should keep reciting more *Little Houses* to resolve the predestined calamities. Also, in the three months following your birthday, you should keep reciting more *Little Houses*.

- If you expect a major predestined calamity, you can vow to recite 108 *Little Houses*. For particularly severe/highly critical predestined calamities, you will need to vow to recite 3 batches of 108 *Little Houses*. Address the *Little Houses* to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”
- It is also important that you persistently perform your daily recitation and recite as many *Little Houses* as possible, make vows and perform life liberations.
- In your zodiac year of birth (or *Ben Ming Nian* in Chinese, referring to the year of one’s Chinese zodiac animal in which one was born), you should also perform recitations of *Little Houses* to the same number as your age, in the same manner as mentioned above.

140. Etiquette for paying respect in temples

Q: Dear Master Lu, as Buddhists, we often visit temples and monasteries. What should we be aware of in terms of our appearance and behaviour?

A:

- As Buddhists, when visiting temples and monasteries, we should not dress casually. We should be clean, tidy and respectful. Your hair should not cover your forehead, otherwise your fortune is likely to be affected. Avoid wearing

dresses/skirts or flip-flops; your attire should cover your shoulders and knees.

- You should speak and behave in a respectful manner. Avoid displaying frivolous facial expressions and gestures. Refrain from inappropriate gestures in temples, including any physical contact between males and females. You should also keep your voice down.
- Avoid having a strong body odour while you are in the temple. If you are not able to control it, then it is best to go outside or go to a corner.
- A Buddhist temple is a holy place; only vegetarian food should be consumed. If you have consumed non-vegetarian dishes, it would be best to brush your teeth and recite the *Jing Kou Ye Zhen Yan* (to purify karma of speech) before going to the temple.
- We should be respectful towards all religions, Dharma Doors (schools of Buddhism), and towards the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha (the Triple Gem) in all circumstances. It is best to perform recitations more and speak less. Avoid saying anything improper and creating karma of speech.

141. Lantern Festival

Q: Master Lu, how should we celebrate the Lantern Festival as Buddhists? What should we be aware of?

A:

- No matter what festival is being celebrated, many Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and officers from the underworld will be in touch with us on these special occasions. The Lantern

Festival is no exception. The Lantern Festival is celebrated on the 15th day of the 1st lunar month and it marks the last day of the Chinese New Year celebrations.

- According to Chinese tradition, we have “Tang Yuan” (glutinous rice balls) during the Lantern Festival to celebrate the harmony and reunion of family and friends. This symbolises the unity of heaven, earth, and humanity. When the energy fields harmonise, things will work out better in every respect.
- To harmonise our energy field with that of heaven, we should pray to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas more often, and perform more recitations than we usually do. We can recite the **Great Compassion Mantra**, the **Heart Sutra** and the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance**.

During Lantern Festival, reciting the **Heart Sutra** for distant friends or relatives can bless them with more power. Your recitation of the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** should not exceed 27 times per day. For further details, please refer to **Q&A 161: Reciting the Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** on special days and Buddhist commemorative days.

If you have performed many good deeds, you can also recite the **Gong De Bao Shan Shen Zhou**. The Lantern Festival is a day for tolerance, so if you complete more recitations of the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots**, many of your karmic conflicts will be resolved. You can also recite the **Ru Yi Bao Lun Wang Tuo Luo Ni** to help your wishes come true. These Buddhist scriptures can be recited 49 or 108 times each.

- To harmonise our energy field with that of the earth, we

should recite more *Little Houses* than usual to help our karmic creditors, or the deceased friends and family members to ascend to a higher spiritual realm. We can also complete more recitations of the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra***.

- From the perspective of humanity, harmony generates prosperity. We can elevate our spiritual level, cultivate our minds, adopt a vegetarian diet, refrain from committing wrongdoings, be a kind person, and perform life liberations to achieve harmony.
- During the Lantern Festival, burning a high number of *Little Houses* (up to 21) will yield especially good results. You can have *Little Houses* prepared in advance for offering during the Lantern Festival. As many Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and officers from heaven who are specifically responsible for human affairs will be in touch with us during this time, your karmic obstacles will be eliminated more easily.
- Traditionally, people hang lanterns during the celebration of the Lantern Festival. This practice emphasises the union of the “three elements”: heaven, earth and humanity, and helps our deceased family members find their way back home. However, as Buddhist practitioners, the hanging of lanterns is not recommended. All we need to do during the festival is to recite more Buddhist sutras and mantras, and *Little Houses*.

142. Performing recitations in hotels

Q: Master Lu, when we are travelling on business trips or on

holiday, how should we perform our daily recitations and the recitation of *Little Houses*?

A:

- Once you have reached your destination, you can pay your respect to the local Bodhisattvas in your mind by saying the following prayer: “I, <full name>, am now paying my respect to all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and deities in <name of the location>. Please protect and bless me, so that I will be safe and well.”
- As soon as you have checked into your hotel room, you can recite the ***Great Compassion Mantra*** once facing each of the four walls, in a clockwise direction. You can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, and grant me safety.” While you recite the ***Great Compassion Mantra***, you should avoid having the intention of antagonising beings from the spirit world. After you have recited the ***Great Compassion Mantra*** and stated your prayer, you can begin your daily recitations in the hotel room.
- Generally, the energy field in hotels is relatively complex. Hence, it is best to avoid reciting the ***Heart Sutra*** and the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** in hotels. Before you leave for your trip, you can tell Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that you will perform your recitations of the ***Heart Sutra*** and the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** in advance or at a later date. Under urgent circumstances, you can still recite the ***Heart Sutra*** and the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** in your hotel room during the day time. Avoid

reciting them at night.

- No matter how busy you are, you should ensure that you perform recitations every day, even if you are just reciting the **Great Compassion Mantra** a few times.
- If you are reciting *Little Houses* while travelling, you can record the number of sutras and mantras that you have recited, and then put the red dots on the *Little Houses* when you return to your hotel room.
- Generally, you should not burn *Little Houses* in hotels, except during emergencies.

143. Reciting the **Great Compassion Mantra** for Master Lu

Q: Master Lu has sacrificed so much and endured great hardships for sentient beings. Buddhist practitioners like us would like to recite Buddhist scriptures and *Little Houses* for Master Lu. How should we do this in the most appropriate manner?

A:

- You may recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** and the **Heart Sutra** for Master Lu. The former helps strengthen Master Lu's spiritual power, while the latter helps to repay the karmic debts which Master Lu shoulders for sentient beings. However, it is not advisable to recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** for Master Lu.
- Before reciting, you may say the following prayer: "May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless Master Jun Hong Lu, grant him

good health, so that he will dwell long in the human realm. I, <your full name>, now recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** (or the **Heart Sutra**) for Master Jun Hong Lu”.

- Simply recite the mantra or sutra as part of your daily recitations. There is no need to recite and record them on the *Self-Cultivation Record Form*.
- In fact, reciting the **Great Compassion Mantra** or the **Heart Sutra** for Master Lu will enable you to connect to the energy field of the Bodhisattva and Master Lu. Hence, you will receive blessings from the Bodhisattva. Ultimately, you are the one who will benefit from the recitation.
- You may also recite *Little Houses* for Master Lu, as Master Lu has shouldered a heavy burden of karma for sentient beings. When reciting *Little Houses* for this purpose, the reciter needs to write his/her name in the “Offered by” field on the *Little House*. The recipient part (under “Offer To”) can be left blank.
- If you have many urgent matters to attend to, if you are seriously ill, or if you have severe karmic obstacles, then you are advised to perform recitations and recite *Little Houses* for yourself first.

144. Things to be aware of when planning a wedding

Q: Master Lu, I am about to get married. What should we be aware of?

A:

- It is best to have the wedding on a date that is an even

number according to both the lunar calendar and the Gregorian calendar.

- You should be mindful of your speech before the wedding, and when you are in the bridal room or the newlywed room/house. As a Buddhist practitioner, your speech and actions should be polite and controlled.
- The bridal room or the newlywed room/house should not be disorganised. It should be clean and tidy. It is also necessary to maintain a lively atmosphere.
- You can recite *7 Little Houses* and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of the house of <full name of the occupant>”.
- In your new home, you can place landscape paintings of water and mountains, as they will create a positive energy field.
- You can place your enlarged wedding photographs in your living room for a week or longer, but do not display it for more than a month.
- In the bedroom, avoid placing photographs of both of you together. Nevertheless, you can have individual photographs of each person.
- It is best to have a vegetarian wedding banquet. If this is not possible, you should try your best to avoid serving freshly killed animals. However, if this is unavoidable, then you need to complete more recitations of the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra***. It would be best that you also recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** after the banquet.

145. Performing recitations during postnatal care and breastfeeding

Q: Dear Master Lu, can we perform recitations during postnatal care? What are the things both the mother and the child need to pay attention to? Can we perform recitations while breastfeeding?

A:

- It is a Chinese tradition for women to have postnatal care which lasts approximately one month. Giving birth can be life-threatening, therefore it is best to take time to rest and recover after giving birth.
- During postnatal care, the mother can perform recitations, but it is best to recite without making any sound. This is because her body may not have made a complete separation from foreign spirits. During labour, it is possible that there are many foreign spirits nearby who are hoping to be reborn into the human realm. Therefore, even after the mother has given birth, many foreign spirits may still stay around to wait in line for a chance to be reborn. If the mother performs an excessive number of recitations, then it is possible that other minor foreign spirits would come and ask her to recite sutras and mantras for them. As a result, the mother may suffer from headaches, discomfort throughout the body, or excess bleeding after labour.
- If the mother would like to perform daily recitations or recite *Little Houses*, it would be best to do so during the daytime. After the period of postnatal care, as her health gradually improves, she can perform recitations during night time as

- well. The mother can perform daily recitations and the recitation of *Little Houses* while holding the baby. However, the **Heart Sutra** or the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra** should not be recited in the evening while holding the baby.
- According to Chinese tradition, the Full Moon ceremony is held one month after a baby is born, and parents give out hard boiled eggs (dyed red) to visitors attending the ceremony. This practice makes some sort of sense.
 - The souls of infants less than one month old are usually not yet complete, and many surrounding foreign spirits may enter and exit the infants' bodies. As a newborn's soul is incomplete or scattered, if a visitor has an aggressive facial expression or has foreign spirits occupying their body, the infant's soul will be frightened away. As a result, the infant will cry and become unsettled. Therefore, it is not recommended to have visitors during the first month of having a newborn.
 - The mother can recite the **Heart Sutra** for both herself and her child during breastfeeding.
 - Generally, the mother can recite the following for infants less than one month old: the **Great Compassion Mantra** up to 3 times per day, the **Heart Sutra** up to 7 times per day, the **Gong De Bao Shan Shen Zhou** 21 times per day, the **Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou** 21 times per day, the **Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan** 21 times per day, and the **Ru Yi Bao Lun Wang Tuo Luo Ni** 21 times per day. After the infant reaches one month old, the mother can include the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** and the recitation of *Little Houses*.

146. Coping with stuttering

Q: Dear Master Lu, I stutter but I was not born with it. When I was little, I imitated the stuttering speech of others, and then I also started to stutter. Since I did not acquire this at birth, could this be related to karmic obstacles or foreign spirits?

A:

- Stuttering is an illness resulting from karmic obstacles. It does not matter whether you were born with it or if you acquired it from imitating other people, your stuttering is caused by your own karmic obstacles.
- It is possible that in your previous lives, you generated major karma of speech and made too many inappropriate remarks, and as a result, you are unable to speak fluently in your present life.
- It is also possible that in your previous lives, you consumed an excessive quantity of freshly killed animals, and made comments about whether they were tasty or not while you ate them.
- Since this is a problem caused by karmic obstacles, you need to diligently perform recitations, cultivate your mind, repent and repay your karmic debts.
- For your daily recitations, you can recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times, the **Heart Sutra** at least 21 times, and the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 3 to 5 times.

Stuttering is a problem related to one's mental health. Therefore, it is recommended that you complete more recitations of the **Heart Sutra** than you normally would. You

can also say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, grant me wisdom and help me to recover from stuttering.”

- You can recite 49 *Little Houses* for the first batch, and then 7 *Little Houses* for every subsequent batch until you have fully recovered.
- In addition, it is strongly recommended that you also make vows and perform life liberations.

147. Performing recitations for people with Hepatitis B

Q: Dear Master Lu, I am a Hepatitis B carrier. How should I perform recitations?

A:

- From a medical perspective, Hepatitis B is related to a physiological imbalance. In fact, this is an illness resulting from karmic obstacles, regardless of whether you were born with it or you became infected later in life.
- The following is recommended for your daily recitations: The ***Great Compassion Mantra*** at least 21 times, the ***Heart Sutra*** 7 times, and the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 3 times. These are the fundamentals.
- In addition, you should recite the ***Sheng Wu Liang Shou Jue Ding Guang Ming Wang Tuo Luo Ni*** at least 21 times per day. This is because such an illness is detrimental to people during old age and can affect their lifespans. Before you recite this mantra, you can say the following prayer: “May

the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <full name>, help me to eliminate my Hepatitis B virus.”

- You should combine the above with the recitation of at least 3 *Little Houses* per week. Please be persistent and recite the *Little Houses* continuously until you have fully recovered. Generally, you can recite 21 *Little Houses* for your first batch, and 49 *Little Houses* for your second.
- You will also need to perform life liberations in large quantities and make vows.

148. Performing recitations for people in a vegetative state

Q: Master Lu, I heard that the souls of people who are in a vegetative state are no longer present. For situations like this, is there still a possibility for them to recover if we perform recitations for them?

A:

- The souls of people who are in a vegetative state have indeed left their bodies. Using the method of calling their souls back no longer works. You can only seek help from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to have the soul returned to the body, and that requires making great vows.
- Great vows include the vow to complete reciting a certain number of *Little Houses* within a certain period of time. For example, you can vow to recite 892 *Little Houses*, and then persist with your recitation until the patient has fully recovered.

- You can include the following in your daily recitations: The **Great Compassion Mantra** 49 times, the **Heart Sutra** 49 times, the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 7 times, the **Cundi Dharani** 49 times, the **Gong De Bao Shan Shen Zhou** 49 times, and the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots** 49 times.
- You also need to perform life liberations in large quantities.
- There have been successful cases from Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door where people have woken up from a vegetative state.

149. Eye disorders

Q: Dear Master Lu, I am severely nearsighted. Is this a disorder resulting from karmic obstacles? In addition to performing my daily recitations, what else can I do?

A:

- In general, illnesses can be caused by physical reasons or karmic obstacles. If you have not over-stressed your eyes, then it is possible that your poor eyesight is related to karmic obstacles.
- You can recite the **Great Compassionate Mantra** 21 times per day, and pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to alleviate your eye disorder.
- Recite the **Heart Sutra** 21 times or more per day, as the recitation of this sutra can help you to gain wisdom and good eyesight. You can pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to cure your eye disorder.
- Recite the **Ru Yi Bao Lun Wang Tuo Luo Ni** 49 times per day,

as the recitation of this mantra is beneficial for the cardiovascular system.

- Recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** about 3 times per day. When you say the prayer, make sure to pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to help you to repent and eliminate the karmic obstacles that have caused your eye disorder. Meanwhile, recite around 3 *Little Houses* per week and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”.
- You can apply the Great Compassion Water to your eyelids. Note that it is not necessary for the water to get in your eyes.
- You should also make oil offerings more often. The offering of oil can help us gain wisdom and good eyesight.

150. Practising vegetarianism

Q: Dear Master Lu, I am now almost a full-time vegetarian, but I am concerned that I am not getting enough nutrients. What can I do?

A:

- Vegetarian food can be very healthy and nutritious.
- We should ensure that we have a balanced diet, as we need to take care of our bodies. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas would also like us to have a healthy body so that we can practise Buddhism better.
- Vegetarians can consume eggs. Eggs are nutritious, and the consumption of eggs is accepted by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The eggs we consume are usually not fertilised and cannot hatch. However, avoid consuming quail eggs or other bird eggs as they are already fertilised.

- Vegetarians can also consume milk and other dairy products to replenish the calcium and other essential nutrients in the body.
- It is recommended that you consume more soy products, as they are high in protein. Soy products include soybeans, bean curd (tofu), tofu sheets, and soy milk.
- You can also choose other soy products such as soy ham, soy sausage, soy meat, and soy duck. These soy products contain lecithin and are high in protein. They are also very tasty.
- Vegetarians need to be creative and have a wide variety of foods in their diets. You can steam, boil, or stir-fry your dishes. If the taste is too plain and you have the same dishes over a long period of time, you may lack certain important nutritional elements.
- It is also recommended that you consume more fruits, vegetables, and have a balanced diet rich in various kinds of essential vitamins and minerals.
- Mushrooms and fungus are also very nutritious and tasty.
- In addition, you can consume a variety of grains and nuts including peanuts, walnuts, and chestnuts, as they are all very nutritious.
- You can also take health supplements including soy lecithin and calcium if necessary. Lecithin is particularly beneficial for the brain. Every day we lose large numbers of brain cells, and the regeneration of new cells is relatively slow. Taking soy lecithin supplements will help with the regeneration of your brain cells and enhance your memory.

151. Menopause

Q: Master Lu, my mother is currently going through menopause, and she is experiencing problems with her health and temperament. Can you please advise what we should do?

A:

- It has already been scientifically proven that both men and women experience menopause. However, women tend to experience more noticeable symptoms.
- From a medical perspective, the cells in our body enter a natural period of degeneration when we reach a certain age. From the Buddhist perspective, this is the period when negative karma ripens and we start undergoing karmic retribution.
- The positive and negative karmic effects from the good deeds and wrongdoings that we have done in our previous lives cease at the age of 45 to 50. Thereafter, the karmic retributions that result from our present life will start to take effect.
- When we reach this age, we will experience many changes in our career, family, and life. There may be major ups and downs both psychologically and emotionally. Some people may feel they are becoming old and useless, and sink into a state of psychological imbalance, which may in turn leads to a state of physiological imbalance.
- When going through menopause, you should first adjust your mindset and maintain optimism. It will also be helpful to communicate with family members and friends more often.

- In terms of daily life, it is recommended that you have a regular sleep routine. Go to bed early and rise early. Maintain a healthy diet and avoid spicy or overly stimulating food. It is also recommended that you keep yourself warm and take some health supplements that are beneficial to your overall well-being.
- During menopause, it is common for people to get agitated or upset easily. The key is to use our minds to keep our tempers under control. If we cannot control ourselves, then we are just following the negative karmic path. If we can control ourselves, then we will be able to resolve the negative karmic affinities or even transform them into positive ones. For us to change our destiny, we still need to rely on recitation of Buddhist scriptures and cultivation of our minds. Our body and mind will improve gradually as we pray for protection and blessings from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- You can recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times or more per day to increase your spiritual power so that you can better control your negative emotions.
- You can recite the **Heart Sutra** 21 times or more per day so that you can free your mind and gain a broader perspective.
- You can also recite the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots** 21, 27 or 49 times per day to help resolve karmic conflicts from previous lives and from this life.
- In addition, you can recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 1 to 3 times per day. You can also recite around 3 *Little Houses* per week and address them to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”. This would help you to

eliminate your karmic obstacles and repay your karmic debts.

- At the same time, you may make vows and perform life liberations.

152. Spiritual substitutes

Q: A psychic medium once mentioned that if you want a child to have a long lifespan, then you need to find a “spiritual substitute”. Could Master Lu please advise us regarding this issue? If a spiritual substitute has already been employed, would this affect the child? What should we do?

A:

- The practice of employing “spiritual substitutes” to cure illnesses or burning dummies is a way of falsifying one’s record in the underworld. It is against the Buddhist rules and considered an act of deceit by the underworld.

Suppose you owed someone money and you tried to escape the debt. Does that mean you no longer need to repay the debt? No one can escape from the justice system in heaven. Once officials from the underworld check your personal file and find out, you will be in danger of losing your life.

- If you are practising Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door, then the best solution is to recite Buddhist scriptures and cultivate your mind. You should persistently perform daily recitations, recite *Little Houses*, and eliminate karmic obstacles by yourself. At the same time, you should perform life liberations, make vows, and perform meritorious deeds. You can also pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to protect and bless

<the child’s full name> with good health.

- It will be more complicated if a spiritual substitute has been employed. The substitute’s spirit may have entered a place that is neither in the human realm nor in the underworld, as it is assuming another person’s identity. It is important to help the spirit of the substitute ascend to a higher realm as soon as possible. The spirit may even have additional demands. Therefore, you must sincerely repent and correct your wrongdoings in order to be forgiven by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- One needs to recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** specifically for this matter. You can recite it 7 times per day for three months, and then gradually reduce the number after three months. Say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva have mercy on <the child’s full name>, and forgive him/her for offending spiritual beings. Please forgive <the child’s full name> and help him/her to eliminate calamities and disasters.” Meanwhile, parents also need to recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 3 times per day for one month to repent of this wrongdoing. In addition, the parent needs to continue reciting *Little Houses* for their own karmic creditors.
- You will also need to recite *Little Houses* for the substitute’s spirit. Recite at least 49 *Little Houses* for the first batch, followed by 21 *Little Houses* for each of the three subsequent batches. Address the *Little Houses* to the “Karmic Creditor of <the child’s full name>”

153. Problems encountered when introducing Buddhism to people

Q: Master Lu, I made a resolution to help people become spiritually awakened by introducing Buddhism to them, but I have not been successful in my attempts. I also have headaches and become ill every time. Is it because my approach is inappropriate, or is it because I should not be doing this?

A:

- There are several reasons for being unsuccessful when introducing Buddhism to others:
 - Insufficient merits and virtues. If this is the case, then we need to enhance our daily recitations and eliminate karmic debts in order to spiritually awaken ourselves as well as others more effectively.
 - The karmic obstacles of the other party may be too severe. This prevents them from attaining a clear understanding of themselves and realising their true nature.
 - The karmic conditions of the other party are not yet fully mature. Everyone has Buddha nature, but for some, their karmic conditions have not yet ripened.
 - The karmic connection between you and the other party may not be strong enough. This results in the other party not agreeing with what you say.
- When we introduce Buddhist teachings to others, we need to be mindful of our approach. If the other party still shows little interest after half an hour of interaction, then it is possible for the foreign spirits of that person to occupy us.

In addition, if the other party creates karma of speech during the interaction, then we will also share some of the responsibilities.

- As a beginner with limited spiritual power, you can start by giving out Master Lu’s books or radio program recordings, and briefly describing Master Lu’s transcendental ability to help people become spiritually awakened. You can also refer them to Master Lu’s blog or website and encourage them to read about the inspirational experiences shared by other Buddhist friends who have recovered from various illnesses.
- Avoid having selfish thoughts when introducing Buddhist teachings to people. We need to bring forth our innate compassion to benefit and help people, so that there will be no outflows of our merits and virtues when we perform meritorious deeds.
- We should be sincere when promoting Buddhist teachings. We can share our own experiences of practising Buddhism, including the way our lives have changed after reciting Buddhist scriptures. Although our experiences may be limited, as long as we are sincere in sharing our stories, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will give us their blessings, and we will then encounter more miraculous experiences ourselves.
- With limited power, we may experience some physical discomfort if the other party has severe karmic obstacles. It is because we are likely to attract the foreign spirits or the karmic obstacles of theirs. When we help others we often do so at a cost to ourselves. However, this form of sacrifice leads to great merits and virtues as small deeds add up. We will be rewarded in the end for accumulating merits and

virtues in our lives. Nothing comes for free. Do not let the fear of hardships get the better of you and cause you to give up helping others.

- We also need to bear in mind that the physical discomfort that we experience may not be entirely due to the other party's karmic obstacles. It could also be caused by our own karmic obstacles.

If we are unsure of the situation, we can do recitations of the **Heart Sutra** for ourselves first, as the recitation of the **Heart Sutra** provides immediate benefits. Avoid reciting the **Great Compassion Mantra** too many times, as it may create conflicts with foreign spirits. We should also recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance**, and *Little Houses* for our karmic creditors. Say the following prayer to Guan Yin Bodhisattva, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>. I will offer <number of> *Little Houses* to the karmic creditor of <your full name>. Other karmic obstacles and karmic debts will be shouldered and repaid by <full name of the other party>. May Guan Yin Bodhisattva grant me safety and good health.” Generally, we can offer 7 *Little Houses* to our karmic creditor.

- We can say the following prayer before we introduce Buddhism to others, “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>. I will be introducing Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door to <full name of the person> today. May Guan Yin Bodhisattva grant me spiritual power and energy, so that their foreign spirits would not come to me. I will teach

him/her how to practise Buddhism and recite Buddhist scriptures.”

- If we experience physical discomfort during or after the process, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, so that I can help <full name of the other party>. I am helping him/her become spiritually awakened, and I am performing meritorious deeds. May Guan Yin Bodhisattva have compassion on him/her, so that the karmic creditor of <full name of the other party> will allow him/her to awaken spiritually. <Full name of the other party> will pay the karmic debts he/she owed to the karmic creditor directly. May Guan Yin Bodhisattva have compassion.”
- The Buddha can only help those who have affinity with Him. The spiritual state of each person is different. Their level of cultivation from previous lives, and the quantity of karmic obstacles, also varies. Thus, if we are truly unable to do something or help someone for the time being, then it would be best to act in accordance with karmic conditions and let it be.

154. Reasons for ineffective recitations of scriptures

Q: Master Lu, I have health issues. For the past 10 months, I have been practising Buddhism and performing recitations, but my condition has not improved. Could you please explain this?

A:

- Firstly, ensure that you are strictly following the instructions of Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door to perform recitations of Buddhist sutras and mantras. All Buddhist sutras and mantras are good, but the combination is also very important. Similarly, all medicines can be effective for healing, however, if we consume every kind of medicine then the result would be disastrous. It is better to only follow the prescription given by the doctor you are seeing.
- Ensure that you include a fixed number of recitations for each of the **Great Compassion Mantra**, the **Heart Sutra**, and the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** in your daily recitations. The effectiveness will be reduced with an insufficient number of recitations of the **Great Compassion Mantra** or the **Heart Sutra**. However, if you recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** too many times, then your karmic obstacles may be activated too soon, hence exacerbating your health condition.

Generally, people with severe illnesses should recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** 21 times per day. They should also recite the **Heart Sutra** 49 times per day. People with mental illness should recite the **Heart Sutra** at least 21 times per day. The number of recitations of the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** should be capped. Under normal circumstances, you should recite this Buddhist scripture 1 to 3 times per day, but people with severe illnesses can recite it 3 to 5 times per day. Avoid reciting it more than 7 times per day, otherwise you may activate your karmic obstacles excessively.

- While you persist with your daily recitations, ensure that you

also recite a sufficient number of *Little Houses*. The recitation of *Little Houses* goes hand in hand with the recitation of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***. Without sufficient number of *Little Houses*, you may experience discomfort or an exacerbation of your condition. Generally, you need to complete 3 *Little Houses* addressed to your karmic creditor per week if you are reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** 3 times per day.

Daily recitations can be compared to your daily expenditure, whereas *Little Houses* can be compared to paying your debts. We all need to take it seriously and repay our debts.

- Ensure that you are performing your recitations correctly. Also ensure that you recite *Little Houses* diligently and sincerely, and check if you fill out the *Little Houses* properly and use the correct name. These are all important factors that can affect the quality and effectiveness of *Little Houses*.
- Also ensure that you are using the right name. If you have changed your name, you should lodge the *Application for Change of Name* (see **Appendix B**) first, and then perform recitations using your new name.
- The effectiveness of recitations is also related to the spiritual power of the reciter. With insufficient spiritual power, the results may not be effective. It is important to increase the number of recitations for your daily recitation in such cases.
- Your attitude while performing recitations is also very important. If you have doubts, complaints, and unwillingness in your mind, then the quality of your recitations will be affected.
- Distracted and scattered thoughts and an unfocused mind

will also affect the quality of the recitation.

- In the case where you perform recitations for others while you are not well, you will shoulder the burden of their karma. As a result, your recovery may be delayed. Helping others is a meritorious deed, but it is always associated with a cost. We need to know our own capabilities and limitations.
- For our prayers to be effective, we need to accumulate a great deal of merits and virtues. Therefore, it is important that we also sincerely perform life liberations and make vows.
- If none of the above factors apply, then it may simply be that you have not done enough. For a person with severe karmic obstacles, it is difficult to make dramatic changes within a short period. If we continue diligently and persistently practising Buddhism, we will surely experience positive results in the long term.

155. What to do if one has too much *Yin* energy?

Q: Master Lu, I often have nightmares and I feel cold all the time. Does that mean I have too much *Yin* energy? What should I do?

A:

- Those who have too much *Yin* energy should complete more recitations of the ***Great Compassion Mantra*** to enhance their energy and spiritual power.
- You should also recite *Little Houses* diligently. A person tends

to have a lot of *Yin* energy if foreign spirits are chronically occupying this person's body.

- It helps to increase your sun exposure, especially allowing the sun to shine on your back.
- Ensure that you have the lights switched on in your house to make it bright at night. You can also play the recording of the ***Great Compassion Mantra*** when you are at home.
- Avoid visiting places with a lot of *Yin* energy, such as hospitals, cemeteries, and so forth.
- You should also minimise contact with people who have a lot of *Yin* energy (e.g. those with a very feminine and sentimental character). It is best to be with people who are positive and have lots of *Yang* energy.
- It is also best not to wear a dress or skirt as it may cause your energy to dissipate.

156. What to do if you recite in your sleep?

Q: Master Lu, I often feel that I am performing recitations in my sleep. Sometimes I even recite the ***Heart Sutra***. What does this mean? Do I get up and continue my recitation, or should I go back to sleep?

A:

- This could indicate that you have been making good progress in your Buddhist practice lately, so much so that even your subconscious mind is practising Buddhism and performing recitations. This is a good sign.

- In the case where you only recite a particular sutra or mantra in your sleep, it may mean that you need to increase the number of its recitations, or that you need to check if you are reciting it correctly.
- If you are reciting the **Heart Sutra** or the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra** in your sleep in the middle of the night, then it could be that your karmic creditor is asking you to repay karmic debts and that you need to recite *Little Houses*.
- If the act of performing recitation wakes you up in the middle of the night, you can go back to sleep.

157. Order to recite scriptures contained in a *Little House*

Q: Dear Master Lu, there are four types of sutras and mantras included in the *Little House*. Do they need to be recited in any particular order?

A:

- The *Little House* consists of four kinds of Buddhist scriptures. The order in which you recite them does not matter.
- According to the latest teachings of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, it is recommended that you divide the recitations of the **Great Compassion Mantra** into smaller sets (27 times in total). You can start with reciting the **Great Compassion Mantra** 7 times (or more), then recite another sutra or mantra. Each time before you recite a different sutra or mantra, you can recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** another 3 times. At the end, you can complete the remaining recitations of the **Great Compassion Mantra**.

- The following order can be used as an example:
 - The **Great Compassion Mantra** 9 times;
 - The **Great Compassion Mantra** 3 times, followed by the **Heart Sutra** 49 times;
 - The **Great Compassion Mantra** 3 times, followed by **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra** 84 times;
 - The **Great Compassion Mantra** 3 times, followed by the **Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan** 87 times;
 - The **Great Compassion Mantra** 9 times.
- This method of performing recitations can enhance the power of the *Little Houses*. As each *Little House* is effectively enveloped by the power of the **Great Compassion Mantra**, it will be better protected and blessed with more power.
- The above example is a guide only, and it is not the only method. Some people recite multiple *Little Houses* at the same time, while others may take several sessions before they can complete one *Little House*. You can adjust your method according to your own situation.
- The general idea is that it is best to begin and end the recitation of each *Little House* with the **Great Compassion Mantra**. When reciting a different sutra or mantra, you should start with the **Great Compassion Mantra**. The recitation of the **Great Compassion Mantra** here can be from the part of the *Little House*, or from the part of your daily recitation (that is, on top of your promised number of recitations for the **Great Compassion Mantra** every day).
- It is fine if you are unable to follow the above method of reciting *Little Houses* due to time constraints or other reasons. What matters most is the sincerity and effort that

you put into reciting *Little Houses*.

158. Offering *Little Houses* to resolve karmic conflicts

Q: I hurt the feelings of several boyfriends in my previous relationships. Now I have realised my mistakes, and I am reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** as well as the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** to repent my wrongdoings. Do I also need to offer *Little Houses*? What should I do?

A:

- The recitation of the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** is effective in resolving karmic conflicts, provided that the damage is not severe, otherwise the karmic conflicts will still not be completely resolved. For example, you accidentally bump into someone. If you apologise and this person forgives you, then it is over. However, if you have caused injuries to this person, simply saying sorry is not enough to resolve the issue. You will need to offer *Little Houses* to resolve the karmic conflicts. This is a much more powerful and effective way to resolve karmic conflicts.
- You can address the *Little House* to “<Your full name> resolves karmic conflicts”. Generally, it is not recommended to address the *Little House* to the name of the other party or names of both parties. Before you recite and burn the *Little House*, you can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to resolve my negative karmic affinity with <full name of the other

person>.” Alternatively, you can say the prayer in its general form: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to resolve my negative karmic affinity.”

- These *Little Houses* intended to resolve karmic conflicts are different from those for karmic creditors. Karmic creditors can be those to whom you owe karmic debts from your previous or present lives, or to deceased family members. Therefore, there can be both positive and/or negative karmic affinities between you and the karmic creditors. Karmic conflicts, however, are definitely associated with negative karmic affinities. *Little Houses* to resolve karmic conflicts are specifically used for resolving your negative karmic affinities. When you burn these *Little Houses*, karmic creditors will not be able to receive them. They are solely for resolving issues regarding karmic conflicts. Hence, they are very effective for resolving negative karmic affinities.
- *Little Houses* to resolve karmic conflicts cannot be used to replace *Little Houses* for karmic creditors. You still need to continue reciting the latter as usual. If you feel that you are having conflicts with others, or you wish to resolve long-term conflicts due to karma, then you can recite more *Little Houses* to resolve karmic conflicts, e.g. in batches of 7 or 21. You can also recite the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots*** at the same time.
- This method is effective for resolving misunderstanding between couples, in family relationships, issues with neighbours or co-workers, and all other interpersonal conflicts.

- You can also offer *Little Houses* to resolve karmic conflicts on behalf of other people. For example, if your parents often have arguments, you can help improve their relationship by addressing *Little Houses* to “<Either the full name of your father or the full name of your mother> resolves karmic conflicts”. Avoid writing down both of your parents’ names.

159. Can *Little Houses* be used to pray for ourselves?

Q: Master Lu, when we recite *Little Houses*, do we say the same prayers for ourselves as we do for our daily recitations? In the past, I was not aware of this and I have been saying the same prayers. Recently, I was told that this is not encouraged. What should I do?

A:

- Daily recitations are different from recitations for *Little Houses*. Daily recitations are similar to daily expenditure, whereas *Little Houses* are similar to mortgage or loan repayments. The prayers and the number of recitations that you perform for everyday use should be separated from those for *Little Houses*. Do not mix them up.

You pray for yourselves when you perform your daily recitations e.g. for your health, gaining wisdom, and so forth. *Little Houses* are offered to karmic creditors or deceased family members to repay your karmic debts. Therefore, you are not supposed to pray for yourselves when you recite the sutras and mantras contained in *Little Houses*.

- However, if you have a strong intention to pray for yourself while reciting *Little Houses*, and if you fail to fill in the red dots in the circles on the *Little Houses* immediately after finishing your recitation, then your recitations of the *Little Houses* are very likely to become part of your daily recitation instead. In other words, when you fill in the circles at a later stage, the power from the recitation would already have been used, rendering the *Little Houses* ineffective. This is one of the reasons many Buddhist practitioners still fail to experience significant effects after they have offered a large number of *Little Houses*.

Hence, refrain from filling in the *Little Houses* with the recitations that you perform for everyday use, or including prayers for yourselves when you are reciting *Little Houses*.

- For the *Little Houses* that are reserved for future use, you should neither include any specific prayers for yourself or others, nor mention anyone’s name. Simply say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva be my witness, I, <your full name>, now recite the scriptures contained in this Little House (the **Great Compassion Mantra**, the **Heart Sutra**, the **Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra**, and the **Qi Fo Mie Zui Zhen Yan**).” Do not pray for anything for yourself.

The power from the recitation will be automatically stored in the *Little House* when you fill in the circles. At a later stage, when you fill in the “Offer To” field, the *Little Houses* will be addressed to that entity accordingly, such as your karmic creditor, deceased family member, etc.

- If you already know to whom you are going to give the *Little*

Houses, it is best to fill in the recipient on the *Little Houses* before you start the recitation.

Just as we complete one course of medication before beginning another, *Little Houses* will generally be more effective if recited in batches. As you begin each batch you can first make a vow to Guan Yin Bodhisattva stating the number of *Little Houses* you will recite and the timeframe in which you will complete them by.

For example, “I, <your full name>, will recite <X number of> *Little Houses* for my karmic creditor in <Y period of time> or by <date>. May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to recover from <name of illness>.” At this point, you can say a prayer when making your vows.

However, when reciting or burning *Little Houses*, do not say any prayers for yourself, except the following: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to give these *Little Houses* to <name of the recipient>”; the recipient can be your karmic creditor, a deceased person, an aborted or miscarried child, or the karmic creditor of someone’s house.

After you finish burning the *Little Houses*, you could say the corresponding prayers. For example, if you give *Little Houses* to the karmic creditor of <someone’s full name>, you could pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to grant this person good health, safety and good fortune. If you use the *Little House* to resolve X’s karmic conflicts, you could pray to Guan Yin

Bodhisattva to help resolve the negative karmic affinity between X and Y.

- You have to fill in the name of reciter before reciting *Little Houses*, regardless of whether the *Little Houses* are reserved for future use or not. This helps to ensure that the power of the sutras and mantras are properly stored in the *Little Houses*. If you fill in the circles before you fill in the name of the reciter, other spirits may take away the sutras and mantras.

160. Memory loss

Q: Dear Master Lu, one of our fellow Buddhist practitioners has many family members suffering from memory loss. Could you please advise why this happens and what sutras or mantras he should recite in this situation?

A:

- Memory loss or amnesia, from the philosophical perspective of the spirit world, is due to the soul or spirit of a person being incomplete or separated from the physical body. This happens when one is entangled in certain situations, such as being sued, or having a lawsuit brought against you. They will be in a constant state of anxiety, and thus distracted and fail to remember anything. This is how one's soul is not fully present.
- Many people's brains have limited capacity, and their brain cells deteriorate too quickly, which slowly results in memory loss. Moreover, they usually throw a tantrum a few days before they experience memory loss. As soon as they lose

their temper, their mental capacity and memory will be completely diminished, and they will experience a mental blank, followed by memory loss. This is very common.

- For temporary memory loss:
 - First, one must take preventative measures such as getting sufficient sleep, because sleep is important for brain cell regeneration.
 - Avoid sudden shocks to the nervous system, as this may cause blood clots, bleeding in the brain, strokes etc. Just like a rubber band. You can stretch it slowly, but if you pull it abruptly, it will snap. Hence, one needs to learn to reason and respond to all kinds of situations in an orderly manner.
 - Finally, taking soy lecithin supplements will help to strengthen brain cells.

One can also take “Danshen Pian” (salvia miltiorrhiza) tablets. Temporary memory loss or hallucinations are very dangerous; they indicate poor blood circulation and damaged blood vessels. Taking Danshen Pian tablets can improve blood circulation and prevent blood clots, reducing the risk of stroke or sudden memory loss.

- Most importantly, one must diligently perform recitations, and cultivate one’s mind. Persist with daily recitations: The **Great Compassion Mantra** 17 times per day, the **Heart Sutra** 49 times per day, and the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** 3 to 5 times per day. These are the core mantras and sutras. Further recitations can include:
 - The **Ru Yi Bao Lun Wang Tuo Luo Ni** 49 times per

day. This is beneficial for the cardiovascular and the cerebral circulatory systems.

- The ***Da Ji Xiang Tian Nü Zhou*** 49 times per day. When reciting this mantra, one will receive auspicious light scattered by the goddesses in heaven. In fact, the light is also from Bodhisattvas.
- The ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra*** 49 times per day. This is very important. The adverse impact of small spirits such as those of fish and prawns, whose death one’s actions caused, must not be underestimated. If there are many of these minor spirits around one’s brain, this can cause loss of many brain cells.
- Recite 3 or more *Little Houses* for one’s karmic creditor each week.
- Perform life liberations and make vows.

161. Reciting the *Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance* on special days and Buddhist commemorative days

Q: Master Lu has previously explained that during Chinese New Year and other important festivals and special days, we can eliminate many karmic obstacles by completing more recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***. What is the maximum number of recitations that we can do? Do we need to complement this with the recitation of *Little Houses*? What should we be aware of?

A:

- On major festivals and special days such as Chinese New Year's Eve, Chinese New Year, New Year's Day (January 1st of the Gregorian calendar), the Lantern Festival, and birthdays of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (including Birthdays, Renunciation Days, Enlightenment Days), we can complete more recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** than usual to repent and eliminate our karmic obstacles. On these days, many Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Dharma Protectors will be in touch with us, hence many karmic obstacles can be eliminated if we increase the number of recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***.
- On Chinese New Year's Eve and Chinese New Year, we can recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** a maximum of 87 times during these two days. That is, the sum of the recitations for these two days should not be over 87. Do not recite it 87 times for each of the two days, otherwise karmic obstacles will be activated. Other special days such as New Year's Day (January 1st of the Gregorian calendar), the Lantern Festival, the Mid-Autumn Festival and birthdays of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, we can recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** no more than 27 times per day. On the Ullambana Festival (also known as the Zhong Yuan Festival, or the Hungry Ghost Festival, the 15th day of the 7th lunar month), we should recite it no more than 21 times. On the 1st and 15th day of each lunar month, we can recite it no more than 13 times per day.
- Below are the dates on which we can complete more

recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***:

- The 1st day of the 1st lunar month, Maitreya Bodhisattva’s Birthday – 87 times (you can start reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** on Chinese New Year’s Eve, and complete the 87 times during these two days);
 - The 8th day of the 2nd lunar month, Shakyamuni Buddha’s Renunciation Day – 27 times;
 - The 15th day of the 2nd lunar month, Shakyamuni Buddha’s Nirvana Day – 27 times;
 - The 19th day of the 2nd lunar month, Guan Yin Bodhisattva’s Birthday – 27 times;
 - The 8th day of the 4th lunar month, Shakyamuni Buddha’s Birthday – 27 times;
 - The 19th day of the 6th lunar month, Guan Yin Bodhisattva’s Enlightenment Day – 27 times;
 - The 13th day of the 7th lunar month, Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva’s Birthday– 27 times;
 - The 30th day of the 7th lunar month, Kṣitigarbha (Earth Store) Bodhisattva’s Birthday – 27 times;
 - The 22nd day of the 8th lunar month, Dipankara Buddha’s Birthday – 27 times;
 - The 19th day of the 9th lunar month, Guan Yin Bodhisattva’s Renunciation Day – 27 times;
 - The 17th day of the 11th lunar month, Amitabha Buddha’s Birthday – 27 times;
 - The 8th day of the 12th lunar month, Shakyamuni Buddha’s Enlightenment Day – 27 times.
- Below are other special dates on which we can complete

more recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***:

- From December leading up to Chinese New Year, every 1st and 15th day of each lunar month – 21 times;
- December 29th, 30th and 31st; January 2nd and 3rd (per Gregorian calendar) – 21 times;
- New Year’s Day (January 1st per Gregorian calendar) – 27 times;
- The 29th day of the 12th lunar month – 21 times;
- The 30th day of the 12th lunar month (i.e. Chinese New Year’s Eve) and the 1st day of the 1st lunar month (i.e. Chinese New Year) – 87 times in total;

Note: In the special case where there is no 30th day in the 12th lunar month of that year, you can recite it 87 times in total over the 29th day and the Chinese New Year. Accordingly, you can recite it 21 times on the 28th day of the 12th lunar month).

- The 2nd day, and 3rd day of the 1st lunar month– 21 times each;
- The 15th day of the 1st lunar month (i.e. the Lantern Festival) –27 times;
- The 15th day of the 7th lunar month (i.e. the Ullambana Festival) – 21 times;
- The 15th day of the 8th lunar month (i.e. the Mid-Autumn Festival) – 27 times;
- The 1st and 15th days of each lunar month – 13 times.
- During the period of Master Lu’s Buddhist conference and public talks, you can recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** up to 49 times per day. If you are to

burn the *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* of the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance**, the maximum number of recitations is 21 per day. Refrain from reciting it too many times, otherwise karmic obstacles can be easily activated.

- During the period of Master Lu’s Buddhist conference and public talks, as long as there are still people making incense offerings at the Guan Yin Hall (the prayer room), you can continue to recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** in the room around the clock. Note that you should avoid reciting the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** after 10pm in the area outside the Guan Yin Hall, such as the hallway. However, it can be recited between 5am and 10pm in this area.
- The above guidelines on the number of recitations already take into account the part included in your daily recitations. Once you have completed the maximum number of recitations on the day (including burning the *Self-Cultivation Record Forms*), refrain from additional recitations, whether it be for everyday use (daily recitation) or for self-cultivation purposes. Otherwise, you are very likely to activate your karmic obstacles.
- On special occasions such as Buddhas’ birthdays, New Year’s Day, Chinese New Year, the Lantern Festival, the Ullambana Festival, and the Mid-Autumn Festival, if you have a Buddhist altar in your home, you can offer the “First Incense”, and while the incense is burning, recite Buddhist scriptures all night until morning. On days other than those mentioned above, offer incense and perform recitations as

usual.

On those days when you can offer the First Incense, if you have a Buddhist altar in your home, you can recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** all night until morning. However, outside these dates, including the 1st and 15th days of each lunar month, avoid reciting it between 10pm and 5am. If you do not have a Buddhist altar in your home, even on those days when you can offer the First Incense, avoid reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** all night. You should follow the usual practice to offer the “Heart Incense” and perform recitations.

- The recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** on these days are best targeted towards the repentance of a specific wrongdoing committed in this life, such as backstabbing or causing harm behind one's back, viewing inappropriate or obscene materials, films, or books and so forth. Once you have recited the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** and sincerely repent your wrongdoing, your karmic obstacles can then be directly eliminated, and you will not need to worry about your karmic obstacles being activated. Hence, there is no need to recite *Little Houses* in tandem with these recitations.

In cases where you do not have a specific wrongdoing to repent, you can make a general statement by saying the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, help me to resolve karmic conflicts, and eliminate karmic obstacles.”

- The recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great***

Repentance on these special days are generally targeted towards the repentance of a specific wrongdoing committed in the present life. This is less likely to activate karmic obstacles. However, for severe karmic obstacles, reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** alone may not be able to eliminate them. Therefore, it is highly recommended that one recites *Little Houses* in tandem with these recitations.

- If you say a general prayer to eliminate your karmic obstacles, or to eliminate certain types of karmic obstacles accumulated from past lives, the karmic obstacles are likely to be activated. For example, if you say a general prayer to repent your karmic obstacles, to repent the karmic obstacles regarding your marriage or relationships, or a specific illness, the karmic obstacles are very likely to be activated. It is because such issues are usually caused by karmic obstacles in your past lives. It is very difficult to completely eliminate significant negative karma like these simply through reciting the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** dozens of times in one sitting. Therefore, in these circumstances, one must recite *Little Houses* along with these recitations.
- To be on the safe side, when you are doing more recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***, you can burn more *Little Houses* to eliminate karmic obstacles more effectively depending upon your own circumstances.
- If you do not have a Buddhist altar in your home, you will have to offer the Heart Incense and pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva first before you can use the above method to recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***. You can

also pay respect and perform prostrations before a statue or image of Guan Yin Bodhisattva at a friend's house if they have a Buddhist altar or at a temple nearby. After doing so, you could choose to perform your recitation elsewhere. If you do not have a Buddhist altar in your home and you divide your recitation of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** into several sessions during a day, then you have to begin each session by offering the Heart Incense before commencing your recitations.

If you have a Buddhist altar in your home but have not made an actual incense offering since you are away from home, then you will also need to offer the Heart Incense before commencing recitations.

- It is best to complete your recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** on these special days and to repent to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas directly as this will achieve the best results. If you are truly unable to complete your recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** on the day, you could burn the *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** that you have prepared beforehand instead. For example, on the 1st or 15th day of the lunar month, you can use the form templates that contain 9 or 12 recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***. Complete these prior to the special days. Take out the forms and burn them if you are unable to complete all the recitations on those days. You can then make up the shortfall by doing additional recitations on the day. The template for *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* can be downloaded from the

official website.

On Chinese New Year's Eve and Chinese New Year, you can use the template that contains 81 (or less) recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***. For major Buddha's birthdays, you could use the templates that contain 27 (or less) recitations. Avoid burning *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* containing a greater number of recitations than the corresponding maximum number on the day.

- Before you burn these *Self-Cultivation Record Forms*, you must make incense offerings at the Buddhist altar. If you do not have a Buddhist altar, you must not burn the *Self-Cultivation Record Forms* of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***.
- Generally speaking, from the middle of December (as per the Gregorian Calendar) until the 15th day of the 1st lunar month, it is best to complete more recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** to eliminate karmic obstacles. You can recite it up to 7 times per day (including the part of your daily recitations). This can be done even without a Buddhist altar.
- On these special days, you can also recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** for your family members. But again, the corresponding daily limits should not be exceeded. This should be completed under the condition that they are also practising Buddhism and reciting sutras and mantras. You should communicate well in advance with the family member, and recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** for them only if they understand and

agree to it.

If the family members do not have a basic foundation, do not believe in Buddhism and do not perform recitations or recite *Little Houses*, then your recitations on their behalf will not be effective. It is best to recite for yourself and repent sincerely. On these special days, avoid doing a large number of recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** for several people.

- It is always good to recite and burn more *Little Houses* on major festivals. To be on the safe side, when you are doing more recitations of the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance***, you should also burn more *Little Houses*.
- Those who are pregnant, or are within the one-month period of postnatal care, should not recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** more than 7 times per day (including the part of their daily recitations) on these special days under any circumstances.
- Children aged 5 and above can follow the aforementioned methods for recitations. Before commencing recitations, they can say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <his/her full name>, help me to resolve karmic conflicts, and eliminate karmic obstacles.”

Children under 12 years old should not recite it more than 7 times (including the part of their daily recitations). They can start reciting it for self-cultivation purposes when they reach 12 years of age.

Only those over 18 years of age can recite it 87 times in total over Chinese New Year’s Eve and Chinese New Year. For

those over 12 and under 18, they can recite it up to 49 times in total over these two days.

162. Helping the deceased ascend to a higher realm by adding recitation of *Amitabha Sutra*

Q: Dear Master Lu, on your radio program, a listener shared that she helped her deceased family member ascend to the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss by reciting the ***Amitabha Sutra*** along with *Little Houses*. How should we go about doing it in terms of the number of recitations, prayers and procedures? Please kindly advise.

A:

- The example on the radio program is a special case. Reciting *Little Houses* for the deceased remains the principal method of helping them ascend to a higher realm.
- If a deceased person had a relatively solid foundation for attaining Buddhahood, practised Buddhism, cultivated their minds while they were still alive, performed good deeds and accumulated merits and virtues, and is in heaven now, then one can also recite the ***Amitabha Sutra*** along with reciting and burning *Little Houses* for them. Say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva have compassion on <full name of the deceased>’s foundation for attaining Buddhahood, and help him/her ascend to the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.” In doing so, the deceased is more likely to be reborn into the

Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.

- If the deceased person's foundation is not solid enough, has a great deal of karmic obstacles or is currently in the underworld, it is very difficult to help them ascend to the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss by reciting the ***Amitabha Sutra***. Therefore, this method is not recommended. The key to helping the deceased ascend to a higher spiritual realm still is continuously reciting and burning *Little Houses* for them.
- If the deceased person has a certain foundation for attaining Buddhahood, you can recite the ***Amitabha Sutra*** for them once a day within the 49 days following their passing, while following the instructions of Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door to burn a large quantity of *Little Houses* for them. In the meantime, recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** for them 3 to 5 times per day to help the deceased quickly eliminate their karmic obstacles.
- If a deceased person with a certain foundation has passed away for a long time, and you still wish to help them ascend to the *Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss*, then you can recite the ***Amitabha Sutra*** once *after* burning every 3 *Little Houses* for them (complete this within the same day).
- When reciting the ***Amitabha Sutra*** for the deceased, you do not need to record the number of recitations on *Self-Cultivation Record Forms*. Simply recite the sutra for them directly.

163. How to overcome drug addiction

Q: Dear Master Lu, my son has fallen into bad company and become addicted to drugs. We've tried everything but to no avail. Is this caused by karmic obstacles or spirits? Would following the Three Golden Buddhist Practices of Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door be able to help him to quit drugs?

A:

- Drug addiction is usually caused by falling into bad company, karmic conflicts accumulated from past lives, one's own karma, and foreign spirits. In addition, when a child is led astray, it is partly due to poor or inadequate parenting. When parents fail to live up to their responsibilities and quarrel frequently, the child will feel helpless in a family environment that lacks warmth and love.
- First, you must give the child guidance to help him get out of his current predicament and avoid any connection with his previous environment.
- You can do more recitations of the **Heart Sutra** for the child to help him grow in wisdom. Generally, the sutra should be recited at least 21 times. Also do more recitations of the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots** to resolve karmic conflicts. Recite this mantra 108 times.
- If he has become addicted to drugs, then it means his karmic obstacles have been activated. Recite the **Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance** between 5 to 7 times per day to help the child repent and eliminate his karmic obstacles.
- The parents must persist in cultivating their minds and

performing recitations. The ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** should be recited 5 to 7 times as part of their daily recitations.

- You can make a vow to recite 87 *Little Houses* for the first batch, followed by 21 *Little Houses* for each subsequent batch. Address the *Little Houses* to the karmic creditor of <the full name of your child>.
- Sincerely perform recitations, make vows and perform life liberations. Pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva to protect and bless your child. When the time is right, pray to Dharma Protectors to give the child a sudden spiritual awakening.
- There have been many cases where people have successfully overcome drug addiction by following the instruction of Guan Yin Citta Dharma Door to practise Buddhism and perform recitations.

164. Addressing *Little Houses* and filling in red dots

Q: Dear Master Lu, what should we be aware of when addressing *Little Houses* and filling in the red dots on them?

A:

Filling in the fields:

- If you already know whom you are going to give the *Little House* to, you have to fill in the “Offer to” (the recipient) field on the right-hand side before commencing recitations. If the *Little Houses* are reserved for future use, you can leave the “Offer to” field blank and fill it in when you wish to burn them.

- The “Offered by” (the reciter) field on the left-hand side must be filled in by the person who is going to recite; the name must be that of the reciter. This field should be completed prior to commencing recitations.
- The Date field on the left-hand side must only be filled in after the *Little House* has been completed. The date can be the day you complete the recitations or the day of burning the *Little House*. For *Little Houses* reserved for future use, the date field is generally left blank until the day of burning (It is equally fine to fill in the date when the *Little House* was completed). The date can be written in numerals horizontally above the Year, Month and Day labels or can be written in Chinese characters vertically down the side.
- Generally, avoid filling in the recipient and the reciter fields of *Little Houses* in large quantities before reciting them. Instead, fill in only as many as you plan to complete that day.

Filling in the red dots on *the Little House*:

- The “Offered by” (the reciter) field on the *Little Houses* should be filled in before proceeding with the red dots. Otherwise, if both the “Offer to” and “Offered by” fields are left blank when dots are added, the power from reciting sutras and mantras can be easily lost.
- Each time you finish reciting a sutra or mantra, use a red marker to fill the corresponding circle. Alternatively, you can add the dots after reciting a series or an entire section of sutras and mantras.
- Only red pens or markers are to be used for the dots.
- Do not tick, cross, dot outside the edge of the circle or fill the circle right to its rim. You are only allowed to fill red dots.

The red dots cannot be too small, otherwise the effectiveness of the *Little Houses* will be reduced. The red dots should take up at least 50% of the space within each circle.

- The sutras and mantras must be recited before the red dots are added; dots must not be added before the recitations are completed. If you accidentally dot a small number of circles for which you have not completed recitations, you should complete the corresponding number of recitations for those sutras and mantras immediately. The number of sutras and mantras recited can exceed the number of circles on the *Little Houses*, but must not fall short of the required number.
- When adding the red dots, it is best to start from the bottom, moving towards the top of the *Little House*. You can add dots for each individual section of sutras and mantras, or you can add dots across all four sutras and mantras from the bottom to the top.
- In order to prevent the sutras and mantras from being snatched by wandering spirits, you must have a red mat upon which to dot the *Little Houses*. The red mat should be at least 60 cm (or 2 feet) high and 60 cm wide (you can use red paper, red fabric or other red materials for the mat). This mat must be one complete piece. You may use glue or red coloured thread to stitch small pieces of material together to form the mat. If it is not convenient to spread the mat out due to the space constraint, you can fold it smaller, but it must be no smaller than A4 size for the mat to be effective. If the red fabric is relatively soft, making it difficult to dot

Little Houses, you can add a piece of red cardboard on top of the fabric and then dot the *Little Houses* on top of the cardboard. However, glass must not be placed on top of the red fabric as it will affect the effectiveness of the *Little Houses*.

The mat can be red on both sides or just one side. You could also use a brand new red table of suitable dimensions to take the place of the red mat. The red paper or fabric used for the mat can have a faint pattern but should not have other colours visible on it; it must be all red without any images of people or animals on it. Moreover, the shade of red should be a “true” red, a bright and strong red. Rose, orange, pink or shades of red with a strong tinge of other colours are not suitable.

- Generally, red dots should be added *before* 10pm. Even if you feel that the energy field is relatively good, and you have a red mat underneath for protection, it is still best to avoid adding red dots after 12am. If you could not manage to add the dots on the day that you recite, you can add them the following day. But the *Little House* should not be left undotted for too long, generally not longer than seven days.
- While filling the red dots, you can recite the **Great Compassion Mantra** and the **Heart Sutra** of your daily recitations. You could also recite the sutras and mantras contained in the *Little Houses* addressed to the same recipient.
- Red dots should not be added during thunderstorms.

165. Interpreting the meaning of dreams

Q: Dear Master Lu, what do our dreams mean?

A:

- Dreams are a way for us to receive messages from the spirit world. Some dreams are foretelling, a reflection of what you have thought about throughout the day, or are scenes from your past lives. Some dreams provide us with some revelation or suggestions, but we should not obsessively dwell on dreams.
- Some dreams become unclear as soon as you wake up, and you cannot recall them clearly, or these dreams may have been scattered and fragmented to begin with. Dreams like these are not very meaningful.
- If some dreams mirror what you are doing or thinking about in real life, it is likely a case of “one dreams at night about what one thinks about during the day”. We do not need to concern ourselves with such dreams.
- If you dream about eating meat dishes, killing animals and such, it is likely that you encounter a Dream Test. Please refer to **Q&A 90: Having Dream Tests**.
- If you dream about ancient times, bygone eras or battles, it is possibly related to your past lives. If the scenes depicted are not particularly meaningful, you do not need to worry about them as the past has passed, and there is no point in dwelling on them. If you dream about yourself in a past life committing bad deeds, or dying, it generally means that you may encounter a predestined hardship or calamity in the

near future, so you must strengthen your recitations and cultivation.

- If your dreams feature people who have passed away, e.g. deceased family members, regardless of the scene, it means that they are asking you to perform recitations for them. You need to recite *Little Houses* addressed to <full name of the deceased>. Generally, you can recite at least 7 *Little Houses* for each deceased person, or 21 *Little Houses* for family members or close friends.
- If you dream about being chased, or people asking you for money or other objects, it means you have karmic creditors and you need to recite *Little Houses*.
- If you dream about becoming pregnant (but you are neither pregnant nor planning to get pregnant in reality), or you dream about babies or children, this generally refers to the children you have aborted or miscarried. You need to recite *Little Houses* addressed to the “children of <your full name>” to help them ascend to a higher spiritual realm. If, during the process of offering *Little Houses*, you dream about children well dressed, happily saying goodbye to you (as if to bid farewell), or taken away by other people, or you dream about someone else becoming pregnant, then it means the child has ascended to a higher spiritual realm.
- Dreams about dead poultry or animals usually refer to the small animals or creatures that you killed or ate in the past. It means that you need to continue reciting the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra***.
- Relatively disturbing dreams, which include dark scenes making you afraid or anxious, or dreams that feature

disasters or inauspicious animals such as snakes, cats, worms/bugs, shoes, etc., indicate trouble or obstacles in the near future. Therefore, you need to do more recitations of the following as part of your daily recitation: the ***Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou***, and the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra***. If you dream about shoes, you should also include the ***Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots***. You will also need to keep reciting *Little Houses* addressed to the “Karmic Creditor of <your full name>”. You should also make vows and perform life liberations.

- Dreams that have bright and beautiful scenes, or make you feel happy are good dreams. Dreams that feature Bodhisattvas, Master Lu, esteemed and virtuous Buddhist monastic or lay practitioners, auspicious creatures or even fresh food are all positive. They indicate good fortune or joy. Nevertheless, you must continue performing recitations and cultivating your mind diligently.
- For reference, the categories below feature some of the items that commonly show up in dreams.

Animals:

- *Auspicious creatures*, (such as dragons, peacocks, phoenixes, qilin/kyrin): These are all auspicious, and will bring good fortune.
- *Fish*: Dreams about live fish represent good fortune and wealth; dreams about dead fish represent dejection or sadness, and you need to recite the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra***. Similar dreams that feature domesticated animals (provided they are alive in the dream) are usually good.

- *Dogs*: Dogs represent friends and companions in dreams. If you dream about dogs being friendly to you, it means your friends will be good to you, or vice versa.
- *Turtles/Tortoises*: It indicates increased longevity. But sometimes different scenes require different interpretations.
- *Snakes, cats, mice, predatory animals (such as tigers, alligators/crocodiles, wolves, bears and other such aggressive wild animals), bats, crows/ravens or spiders*: Generally, it indicates misfortune, and you should recite the ***Xiao Zai Ji Xiang Shen Zhou*** and the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra***.
- *Bugs and insects*: Seeing bugs or insects in the dream normally indicates problems or karmic obstacles. If you dream about your body being covered in bugs, it means your karmic obstacles are about to break out.
- *Domesticated birds*: If they are dead or appear aggressive, it generally indicates that you have killed these kinds of birds before, and you should recite the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra***.

Objects:

- *Teeth*: Dreams about problems with your teeth generally predict family members experiencing health problems, or indicate that you may have conflicts with family members. Upper teeth relate to elder family members, whereas lower teeth relate to younger family members.
- *Fruit and vegetables*: Seeing fresh fruit or vegetables in the dream is good. This indicates that you have

attained a relatively good state from your spiritual practice, and you will have good fortune. However, if the fruit or vegetables are not fresh or become spoiled, you need to recall if you have committed any improper conduct or have had impure intentions/actions while practising Buddhism. You should also examine if you have done anything that reduces your merits and virtues.

- *Food (cakes and chocolate, etc.):* If fresh, then it indicates good fortune. If spoilt or going bad, then it indicates misfortune.
- *Dumplings:* A sign of getting together and reunion (e.g. of family members or friends).
- *Noodles:* It indicates increased longevity.
- *Transport (cars, trains, airplanes, boats/ships, etc.):* A normal, moving car (or other vehicles) is good, indicating good fortune and progress. If the vehicle has broken down or fallen into disrepair, it represents obstacles or problems.
- *New clothing:* Out with the old, in with the new. It indicates the elimination of karmic obstacles.
- *Old clothing:* Generally, it represents karmic obstacles. It means you need to diligently perform recitations and cultivate your mind, repent wrongdoings, and eliminate karmic obstacles.
- *Shoes:* Generally, it indicates misfortune or problems, or may indicate interpersonal conflicts or trouble with people.
- *Hair:* Hair represents worries and concerns. If hair is

long in dreams, it symbolises the presence of many worries and concerns, and you should perform more recitations of the **Heart Sutra**. But if hair is cut short, it indicates the elimination of worries and concerns.

- *Eyes, glasses*: The eyes represent the soul. Seeing things clearly in your dream indicates that you have a very clean and pure mind. If your vision is blurry, it means your mind is not very pure. Glasses or spectacles are the glass of the windows to the soul, so if glasses are broken or dirty it means they are unclean and your viewpoints may be faulty or misguided.
- *Umbrellas*: It indicates parting ways in relationships.
- *Keys and locks*: Our minds can be compared to a lock, and the Dharma Door (Buddhist approach) can be compared to the key that can be used to unlock our minds. If you dream about being unable to unlock something, it means a problem remains unresolved, or that you have yet to have an open heart. Therefore, you should do more recitations of the **Heart Sutra** and read Master Lu's *Buddhism in Plain Terms*.
- *Clocks, watches and time*: It indicates that you should hurry up and make the most of your time in performing recitations and cultivating your mind, do not slack off.
- *Money*: Money is a product of good fortune and misfortune. If you got the money in your dream through legitimate ways, it generally indicates some wealth. However, if someone asks you for money or gives you money in the dream, then it generally relates to *Little Houses*, and you need to recite *Little Houses*

for your karmic creditors.

- *Counterfeit currency*: You need to pay attention to the quality of your *Little Houses*.
- *Damaged sutras or mantras booklets*: It indicates that there has been improper conduct that has reduced your merits and virtues. It could also mean you are not reciting sutras and mantras well, or you have been disrespectful.
- *Coffins*: If the scenes are bright and you feel happy in the dream, seeing coffins indicates wealth. If you feel afraid, or feel the coffin is being prepared for someone in your family, it may indicate that one of your family members will have some health issues.
- *Excrement, faeces*: If you dream about normal human faeces, it means wealth. If you dream about animal faeces, it indicates misfortune. If the excrement is very dirty, smelly and disgusting in the dream, it indicates misfortune, or even the Hell of Excrement.
- *Buddhist Altar*: If you dream about the Buddhist altar being unclean, incense sticks broken or breaking, oil lamps going out, flowers deteriorating, etc., it means there has been improper conduct in how you pay respect or that you have not been sincere or have had impure thoughts. You need to reflect upon yourself and repent. If statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are missing or have fallen over in the dream, it means that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have departed. If the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on the altar have changed forms, making you feel dark, gloomy or scary, it means

that foreign spirits have entered the statues. You will need to recite at least 21 *Little Houses* for the karmic creditor of your house, and pay respect to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas sincerely and properly.

People:

- *Buddhas, Bodhisattvas or deities:* It means that you have affinities with them or that you have been making good progress along the path of practising Buddhism.
- *Master Jun Hong Lu:* You have received blessings from Master Lu. The guidance that Master Lu gives in dreams is real. However, if Master Lu’s speech, actions or demeanour in the dream noticeably differs from his usual self or seems unreal, chances are it is not the real Master Lu, and you should recite *Little Houses* for your karmic creditor.
- *Famous people, heads of state/political leaders:* It indicates good fortune.
- *Deceased people:* Any dreams about deceased people means they require you to perform recitations, and you need to recite *Little Houses* to help them ascend to a higher spiritual realm. If you dream about already deceased people dying again, it means that they will be reborn soon. You can pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva, and recite more *Little Houses* for them as soon as possible to help them to ascend to a higher spiritual realm. You can pray to Guan Yin Bodhisattva as follows: “I, <your full name>, will recite <number of> (Note: 21 or more) *Little Houses*, for <full name of the deceased> in <time period or by X date>. May the Greatly Merciful and

Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless <full name of the deceased> so that he/she can receive *Little Houses* and ascend to a higher spiritual realm.”

- *Living people*: If there are no particularly meaningful scenes depicted in the dream, it means you have affinities with the person. If you dream about living people not behaving normally, acting aggressively or angrily, being unfriendly towards you or asking you for money etc., it means you owe them karmic debts and you need to recite *Little Houses* for them.
- *Visitors to your home*: If you do not know them, it generally means your house has foreign spirits and you need to recite *Little Houses* for the karmic creditors of your house.
- *Black or White Enforcement Officer of the Underworld*: The White Enforcement Officer of the Underworld monitors and records a person’s wrongdoings from their speech or action in the human realm. The Black Enforcement Officer of the Underworld monitors and records a person’s wrongdoings with respect to their thoughts or intentions, or the wrongdoings they have done behind others’ backs in the human realm. It indicates that you have committed a grave wrongdoing or are about to experience a major predestined calamity. You need to make great vows, recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** to repent your wrongdoings sincerely, make a vow to recite a large quantity of *Little Houses* and perform life

liberations in large quantities.

Events:

- *Arguments/fighting*: If you dream about quarrelling with people you know, it indicates that some sort of agreement will be reached. You can recite the **Mantra to Untie Karmic Knots**.
- *Moving house*: It represents change or transitions. If the move goes well in your dream, then it means that things will progress in a positive direction. On the other hand, if the move does not go well, it means that something will not turn out well.
- *Climbing mountains, riding escalators/elevators*: Any movement upwards is a good thing. Any movement downwards indicates going downhill.
- *Losing things*: It foretells misfortune/problems.
- *Lost things and being found again*: Regaining confidence; things will go smoothly.
- *Not wearing clothes*: It means you have karmic obstacles. You have committed wrongdoings in the past that are immoral and cannot be brought to light. To eliminate these karmic obstacles, you need to sincerely perform recitations, cultivate your mind, and repent your wrongdoings.
- *People engaging in sexual or other despicable acts*: It may mean that your mind is not clean or pure enough, and you need to enhance your recitations and cultivation.
- *Fire, things catching on fire*: Major fires or being burnt and injured indicate trouble. Small fires may indicate

good fortune.

- *Leaking water:* Generally, it means that trouble will occur in your home. If the water trickles, and is clean, it could mean wealth.
- *Swimming:* Swimming well indicates success, and vice versa.
- *Taking exams:* If you do well in the exam it means things will go well. It generally indicates that you have been making good progress in practising Buddhism. Otherwise, the opposite is true and you need to enhance the cultivation of your mind.
- *Performing life liberations, introducing Buddhism to others, helping them become spiritually awakened:* Doing meritorious deeds in your dreams is a good thing. In fact, you should also do more of these in real life. If you dream about performing life liberations but there are dead fish or other negative scenarios, you may need to examine whether you have done anything in an improper manner during the life liberation process, such as releasing an incorrect quantity of fish, or releasing the fish at an unsuitable location. If you dream about the dead fish, you should recite the ***Amitabha Pure Land Rebirth Mantra***.
- *Incense sticks curling or looping over on itself or the wick of oil lamps forming the shape of a lotus flower:* It means that Bodhisattvas have visited your home.
- *Showering:* Clearing or eliminating karmic obstacles.
- *Sweeping, cleaning activities:* Clearing or eliminating karmic obstacles.

- *Clipping nails*: Clearing or eliminating karmic obstacles.
- *Raining, snowing*: Heavy rain or snow is indicative of trouble, whereas light showers or snow is indicative of good fortune.
- *Flowers withering, trees/wood rotting or decaying, things getting old/bad*: These indicate misfortune. Conversely, dreaming about everything being renewed and growing indicates good fortune.
- *Death*: Dreaming about someone dying (who is alive in reality) indicates that the person will experience poor health or other trouble. They need to enhance their recitation of sutras and mantras and the cultivation of their mind.
- *Sickness or illness*: It foretells health issues. But in reality the issues tend to be less severe than depicted in the dream.
- *Disasters*: It could be a scene from a past life, or predictive of some future issues. You need to diligently recite sutras and mantras, cultivate your mind, and introduce Buddhism to more people, helping them become spiritually awakened.
- *Going to the toilet*: Clearing or eliminating karmic obstacles.
- *Menstruation*: It foretells gynaecological issues. Pay attention to your health. At the same time, persist with performing recitations and cultivating your mind.
- *Vomiting*: It could be predictive of issues with your digestion or throat. If you feel lighter, better, and more

comfortable after vomiting, then it indicates the elimination of karmic obstacles.

- *Reciting sutras and mantras*: This means that you perform recitations of this sutra or mantra well, and the sutra or mantra has been stored in your eighth consciousness. It could also mean that you need to recite more of this particular sutra or mantra.

Numbers:

- Not all numbers are significant.
- If in your dreams there are scenes about karmic creditors as well as accompanying numbers, then the numbers usually have an association with the number of *Little Houses* you should recite. For example, if someone you do not know says that you owe him \$30, it usually means that you need to recite 30 *Little Houses* for your karmic creditors. For relatively large numbers such as 18,000, if there are no other determining factors or distinctive scenes in the dream, then you can ignore the zeros at the end and interpret it as 18 *Little Houses*. If it is a very large number, such as 3,600,000, you can divide it by 30,000, which gives you 120 *Little Houses*, but it could also mean 36 or 360 *Little Houses*.

In some special circumstances, very large numbers may be the actual representation of the required number of *Little Houses*. For example, \$30,000 may very well mean 30,000 *Little Houses* (The above examples are only an indication as the actual numbers vary according to the details of the dream).

- There are no hard and fast rules. The specific

circumstances shown in the dream as well as one's actual circumstances need to be considered altogether. If someone suffering from a severe illness dreams about \$500, this could probably mean 500 *Little Houses* are required; if a healthy person were to dream about \$500, it might only mean 50 *Little Houses*.

- If you frequently find it difficult to determine the number of *Little Houses* required, just persist with reciting *Little Houses* for your karmic creditors. Even if you cannot tell how many *Little Houses* are required, you will eventually be able to help them ascend to a higher spiritual realm if you continue.
- The above guidelines are only for general reference. There are times when dreams present aspects differently and this can have a bearing on the meaning. Dreams are only a guide, a form of suggestion for Buddhist practitioners. It is best not to fixate on dreams and read too much into them, forgetting what truly matters.
- It is also not recommended to speak of good dreams too much, lest they become inaccurate and cause the good fortune to slip away easily. In addition, if one does not continue to practise Buddhism sincerely and diligently, the good fortune predicted in such dreams will also change in line with your level of cultivation.
Having bad dreams means you need to be more cautious and practise Buddhism more diligently. You need to perform more recitations, recite *Little Houses*, make vows and perform life liberations to resolve these problems.
- It is best to avoid interpreting dreams for people who do not

believe in Buddhism, as this will easily cause you to bear the burden of their karma.

166. Performing recitations on Chong Yang Festival (Double Ninth Festival)

Q: Dear Master Lu, could you please tell us which particular sutras or mantras we should recite for the Chong Yang Festival (the Double Ninth Festival)?

A:

Chong Yang is a special festival. According to the latest teachings by Master Lu, you can perform recitations as follows:

- You can recite the ***Eighty-Eight Buddhas Great Repentance*** no more than 63 times on this day.
- You can offer up to 21 *Little Houses* to each recipient. For example, you may offer 21 *Little Houses* to a miscarried child, 21 to a deceased person, 21 to the karmic creditor of your house, and another 21 to your own karmic creditor.
- You can recite a special combination of sutras and mantras as follows: The ***Great Compassion Mantra*** 3 times and the ***Ru Yi Bao Lun Wang Tuo Luo Ni*** 49 times.



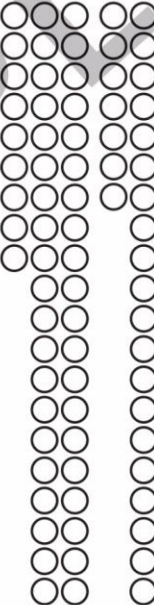
Before reciting, you may say the following prayer: “May the Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate Guan Yin Bodhisattva protect and bless me, <your full name>, and help me have my wishes fulfilled and grant me good health.” You can recite this combination several times a day. There is no limit to the number of recitations; adjust according to

your own capability. More recitations and praying will ensure smoother sailing in the future.

Appendix

Appendix A: Sample *Little House*

OFFERING

O F F E R E D B Y : Y M D	CHI FO MIEH TSUI CHEN YAN 	WANG SHENG CHOU 	TA HSIN CHING CHOU 	O F F E R T O : :
	87 Times	84 Times	49 Times 27 Times	

Little Houses can be downloaded from www.GuanYinCitta.com. For more details please refer to another Master Jun Hong Lu's publication: *A Guide to Reciting the Combination of Buddhist Scriptures: Little Houses*.

Appendix B:

Sample Application for Change of Name

Sincerely Invite

**The Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate
Guan Yin Bodhisattva**

To Witness:

Devotee's original full name: _____

Now changed to: _____

Date of birth: _____ (yyyy/mm/dd)

Devotee's full name: _____

Location: _____

_____ (yyyy/mm/dd)

Application for Change of Name can be downloaded from www.GuanYinCitta.com.

Appendix C:
Sample Application for True Name

Sincerely Invite

**The Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate
Guan Yin Bodhisattva**

To Witness:

Devotee's original True Full Name: _____

Current True Full Name: _____

Date of birth: _____ (yyyy/mm/dd)

Devotee's full name: _____

Location: _____

_____ (yyyy/mm/dd)

Application for True Name can be downloaded from www.GuanYinCitta.com.

**Appendix D:
Sample Application for Convincing Family
Members (Caution: Do not burn this form)**

Sincerely Invite

**The Greatly Merciful and Greatly Compassionate
Guan Yin Bodhisattva to bless**

Devotee: _____
(full name, date of birth yyyy/mm/dd)

**To gain wisdom, believe in Buddhism and start
performing recitations**

Requested by Devotee: _____
(Please write the devotee's full name. Please do not burn this application)

Application for Convincing Family Members can be downloaded from www.GuanYinCitta.com.

