

# Chapter 3: The Meaning of Receiving Dao

After "The Essence of Dao," and "The Relationship between Dao and Humankind," we can understand that Dao is the most precious gift in the universe, that it governs all matters, creates and nurtures all things. Everything in the universe has Dao. This includes people. For us, as human beings, Dao is our original nature or soul, and it is our source of life. In other words, we can live because we have Dao. Since we already have Dao in us, why do we need to receive Dao? This question forms the basis of this chapter.

## 1. The Abdication of God or Dao and the Loss of Conscience

In Heaven, Dao is known as the truth. When Dao is bestowed upon humans, it is known as "true or original nature." In "The Doctrine of Mean (Proper Way)" it was written:

“ The Dao bestowed on us by Heaven is known as nature. Following this nature is known as Dao.

This means that our soul or original nature is bestowed upon us by Heaven. If we act in accordance with our true nature or conscience, then we are acting in accordance with Dao. It is this soul or original nature that gives us life or spirituality.

What is the purpose of having this nature? It is there so that we can manifest or use it as a guide to all our actions.

What are the characteristics of our original nature? In Chinese, "character" is written like this, (1). It is made up of two characters, (†) and (4). (±) means "growth" or "life." Heavenly nature contains the essence of growth and the ability to develop and we inherit this as part of our nature. As a capacity that comes to us from Heaven, growth is inherent in us and need not be learned. It is like other instincts that we possess, like the urge to eat when we are hungry, or putting on more clothes when we are cold. When there is danger we instinctively avoid it. Heaven bestows all these survival instincts on us. Animals and plants have them too.

But unlike animals or plants, human character has an extra quality, (†). This character represents the heart, (f). (†) is an upright heart. It represents the conscience or the godlike nature within us. (✓) is the crooked heart. In Chinese, upright is written ( ). Our upright heart, (†) is the ancient character for virtue.

We can see that we all have a capacity for survival bestowed on us. The essence of growth is to maintain the life of the body. But what is the purpose of maintaining the life of the body? It is to give us the opportunity to fully manifest our spiritual essence. In simpler terms, the reason we are alive is not just to work and earn money, but it is to allow the true nature, or spirituality, within us (†) to shine. In other words, "We eat to live, we do not live to eat." If we only live to eat, we are hardly different from other animals or plants.

Mencius once said:

“ There are only minor differences between people and animals. Saints preserve them, common souls neglect them.

It is evident that people in the world today cling tightly to the satisfactions of the physical life. Generally speaking, people will go to great extremes in the pursuit of material pleasures and enjoyment, but will make little effort to nurture their spiritual essence. Consequently, the upright heart is neglected, and the conscience is lost.

In other words, we can say that the God in us has been obscured and, as a result, the wrong heart and intentions are employed in the running of our daily lives. When this happens conflicts arise between people and between humans and the natural world. When we look around us we see not only individual conflicts but also civil wars and strife between nations.

There seems to be an endless stream of news stories about people killing each other in the streets and violence within families. Such violence and antagonism creates a very negative force, which disturbs the equilibrium of the earth and can cause terrible disasters. All of this is because we choose to nurture our physical selves rather than attending to our spiritual development.

Attachment to worldly pleasures clearly does more harm than good and we will suffer the consequences.

It is for this reason that Dao has been passed to the general public. By receiving Dao we can come to understand the root source of our lives and our spiritual nature. On the one hand we can manifest the virtue within the upright heart by learning the essence of Truth and helping other sentient beings to nurture their spirituality. On the other hand, with this upright heart we can use our bodies to work so that we can nurture our physical lives.

With the emphasis on a balance between the physical and spiritual aspects of our lives, we can establish our virtues and also develop harmonious relationships with others and live a happy, fulfilled life. When we do this we have, in a sense, found our lost conscience and restored the authority of the God within us. Only then can we consider ourselves as people who live according to our true inner nature.

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## 2. Transcending the Cycle of Life and Death

There is no doubt that we all have the spiritual essence bestowed on us by Heaven, that we all have Dao within us and the potential to attain enlightenment. However, without a *Dien Chuan Shr* it is difficult for us to understand the root source of our soul and the way to transcend the cycle of life and death.

The life and cultivation of Siddhartha Gautama offers a good example. Traveling to the four gates of his city, Prince Siddhartha became aware of the suffering of life and the unavoidable painful phenomena of birth, illness, old age and death.

In order to free himself from entanglement and attachment he renounced his throne, left the palace and set out to cultivate as a monk. For six years he lived as an ascetic practicing self-denial. He visited many masters and learned what they had to teach him, but still, in spite of all his efforts and deprivations, he failed to reach enlightenment.

It was only when he met another enlightened Buddha by the name of Ran Deng that he received Dao and was enlightened.

In the past, many cultivators journeyed for thousands of miles, over mountains and through jungles, with one intention in their hearts: to find an enlightened master to pass the Dao to them.

There was a Zen master by the name of Zhi Gong who was the spiritual advisor to Emperor Liang, (c.-560 BC). This Zen master said:

“ If one does not meet an enlightened master,  
It is futile to take the medicine of the Dharma.

The medicine of the dharma means the teaching that the Buddha left behind after 49 years of preaching and teaching. The Zen master stated very clearly that it is useless to learn all this material and gain the knowledge it contains if we do not meet an enlightened master to pass the Dao to us.

Finding such a master is critical. We can see this in the following story of Budhidharma and Hui Ke.

Budhidharma was the 28th patriarch and he lived in India. His master, Panatoro, the 27th patriarch, instructed him to take the Dao to China, so he traveled to China with the intention of passing the Dao to Emperor Liang Wu. However, it soon became clear to him that Liang Wu had no affinity for Dao, and he decided to go on to the town of Jiang Nan.

There he met a monk called Shen Guang who was giving a talk about the principles of Buddhism. He was obviously very well read and had a competent grasp of his subject and in addition to this, he was willing to pass on his knowledge of the sutras showing that he had virtue and generosity. For these reasons, Budhidharma decided to transmit the Dao to him.

So he stepped forward and asked Shen Guang, "What are you talking about?"

Shen Guang answered, "I am preaching the sutra. What I am saying is the Dharma."

Then Budhidharma asked, "Where is the sutra? Where is the Dharma?"

To which Shen Guang replied, "Both the sutra and the dharma are here on the paper."

Budhidharma then drew a picture of a biscuit on a piece of paper and handed it to the monk. "Here," he said, "Take this. It is a biscuit for you to eat."

"How can I eat a paper biscuit?" exclaimed Shen Guang.

"Well," replied Budhidharma, "if the paper biscuit will not satisfy your hunger, how can a paper sutra and a paper dharma enable us to transcend the cycle of birth and death?"

To this Shen Guang responded, "Even if it doesn't allow me to escape the cycle of birth and death, it may help me avoid the cycle of reincarnation."

But Budhidharma shook his head. "If you have the birth and death cycle you have the reincarnation cycle. If you can't resolve the endless succession of births and deaths, how can you transcend the reincarnation cycle? The paper sutra is useless, and the dharma that you preach is useless. I suggest you burn them both!"

Shen Guang was furious. "What I preach is the oneness to which all ten thousand dharmas return. How can you say that my preaching is useless?"

Budhidharma then replied, "Ah, but if all ten thousand dharmas return to one, where does one return to?"

Shen Guang had no answer to that question. He was extremely upset and so angry that he threw his metal beads at Budhidharma with such force that they broke off two of his front teeth.

At first, Budhidharma thought it might be time for him to retreat from the earthly plane, but he recognized that Shen Guang still had many good qualities and decided to pass Dao on to him.

So he took ten beads and transformed them into the ten judges from the underworld as they appeared in Chinese legends. Shen Guang finished preaching and the crowd who had come to listen to him gradually dispersed except for these ten people.

Shen Guang was curious and stepped down from the stage to speak to them. "The talk is over," he said, "Why are you still here?"

The tenth person answered, "We are the ten judges from the underworld and we've come to take you away!"

Shen Guang was terribly shocked. "I have been teaching and preaching for forty-nine years and still fail to rise above the level of the underworld? How can that be possible?"

The ten judges answered him, "What you preach is not the true dharma. Your sutra is not the true sutra. That is why you cannot avoid reincarnation."

Shen Guang then asked, "If I don't have the true dharma and the true sutra, who has them?"

The judges responded, "The very person you insulted and injured just now is an enlightened being. He has the true Dharma and the true sutra."

When he heard this, Shen Guang fell to his knees and pleaded with the ten judges. "Could you leave me here for a little while longer? I would like to find the master and ask him to teach me the true Dharma that can help me transcend the cycle of life and death. I would be very grateful if you would let me stay."

When Shen Guang stood up, the ten judges had disappeared. He knew then that their presence had been a lesson to him to seek the truth. He hurried to search for Budhidharma and finally found him in a cave on Mt. Xiong Er. He was meditating there and Shen Guang knelt down near the entrance of the cave to show his remorse.

It was wintertime, and snow fell in the night but Shen Guang did not move. So sincere was he in his wish to learn the essence of Truth, he knelt there till morning buried to his waist in snow.

Budhidharma was very touched by his sincerity and finally he spoke, "To acquire the true dharma, one must get rid of the left side."

What "get rid of the left side" means in translation is, that to learn the true essence of dharma, one must get rid of all preconceived knowledge and clear away any impure thoughts. But Shen Guang was so eager to acquire Truth that he took the words at face value and thought the left side meant his left arm. Immediately he took out his knife and cut his left arm off.

Budhidharma was very touched by his eagerness to learn and his sincere repentance, so he did finally initiate Shen Guang and pass Dao on to him. He also changed his name to Hui Ke, which means admirable wisdom.

Then Budhidharma covered Hui Ke's wounded arm with his cassock or kasaya, which became the symbol of dharma.

After receiving Dao, Shen Guang wrote this poem:

“ The ten thousand dharmas return to one,  
But where does that one return to?  
At Mt. Xiong Er, I pleaded with Budhidharma,  
Holding the knife in my hand I cut off my left arm.

With the direct one point passed to me,  
I escaped the hands of the angel of death.

From this story, we can see the crucial importance of having an enlightened master to pass Dao on to us. Now that we have all received the key to the Door of Wisdom, it is really up to us to open that door and fully manifest and utilize the essence that lies within.

From this chapter we can see that we need a *Dien Chuan Shr* to initiate us and to uncover our long-lost conscience. Then we can come to understand the true, original nature bestowed on us by Heaven. Furthermore, we can manifest its virtues, help to save all sentient beings and eventually return to our original home.

We have all received Dao. Of all the things we do or achieve in our lives, receiving Dao is the most significant and the most worthy of congratulation. It is the culmination of all our searches and what we find will be ours for eternity.

Can you remember the day you received Dao, in the pure and peaceful atmosphere of the Dao temple, surrounded by the radiant warmth of divine spiritual energy and the compassion of our predecessors? For many of us the reverence and tranquility of the Dao Ceremony makes a very deep impression, and yet, at the end of the ceremony, the only tangible things we carry away with us are books and an apple.

What, then, did we really acquire when we received Dao? This is the subject of this chapter.

Once, in a higher teaching, our Heavenly Mother communicated the following teaching to us:

“ Imparting the mystical heavenly secret of the final period.

Receiving the Pointer that opens the golden lock to reveal the golden body.

Firstly, the Ancient Contract is passed on to give you the credentials you need to return to the origin.

Secondly, the Heavenly Gate, the righteous way of the white period, is pointed out.

Thirdly, you are given the Holy Mantra, the spiritual mantra that links you with Heaven.

Think of the mantra and the divine spirits—Buddhas and Immortals will protect the body of the child.

Once a person has received Dao, their name is recorded in the Heavenly Scroll.

The person's accounts in the Book of Life are settled and they can transcend the Wheel of Suffering.

With this one point, a person may receive Dao in the morning and die in the evening with no regrets.

The priceless jewel is pointed out and returned directly to its origin.

The passage helps us to understand what we received in the Dao Ceremony. It tells us that the propagation of Dao is carried out in accordance with the Heavenly Decree, or the Will of Heaven. This work is not done in order to benefit any particular individual or to secure personal gains of any kind. What is transmitted in the Dao Ceremony is the most precious spiritual teaching that has been available to human beings since ancient times. It is the mystical heavenly truth, the ultimate treasure.

When we receive Dao, the *Dien Chuan Shr* unlocks our Heavenly Gate. This has also been referred to as our "true self" or "true Buddha nature." In the ceremony, the *Dien Chuan Shr* first passes the Holy hand seal, or Unification, to us on behalf of the Divine Patriarch. This gives us the necessary credentials or qualifications to approach the heaven of truth or our origin.

Secondly, when the Heavenly Gate is unlocked, we can begin to see our true Buddha nature. This one point that reveals our true selves to us also transmits the same ultimate truth that was passed down from generation to generation of saints and sages in the past.

Next is the transmission of the wordless sutra Holy Mantra. These words, passed on to us by word of mouth but imprinted in our hearts, are the spiritual mantra that connects us with Buddhas.

In this final period we face many tragedies and disasters. There are catastrophes like floods, earthquakes and famines; civil wars, AIDS, environmental disturbances like the greenhouse effect and the pollution of our air, earth and water. Due to the compassion of our Heavenly Mother and the great vow of Maitreya Buddha, we can use the Holy Mantra to help us in life-threatening situations.

Since we have received Dao, our names are recorded on the heavenly scroll. If we cultivate our hearts and nurture our souls in accordance with truth, contribute our efforts with sincerity, and establish our virtues, we can be absolutely certain to transcend the cycle of suffering.

Confucius once said:

A person who receives Dao in the morning may die in the evening with no regrets.

What did he mean by that? He meant that receiving Dao can lead us back to our origin and allow us to break the wheel of sorrow. This is made possible through the *Dien Chuan Shr* transmitting the ultimate truth. That is why this precious essence we receive is known as the priceless jewel of the universe.

So let us cultivate with sincerity so that we may all return to the kingdom of truth. This is the teaching and guarantee given by our Heavenly Mother that we can one day return to our true home.

From this passage we can understand that during the Dao Ceremony we received the Three Treasures. The meaning of these Three Treasures was explained to us when we received Dao. Because of limited time, it may have been a rather brief explanation. Let us take the opportunity here to refresh our memories.

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# 1. The Heavenly Gate

The Heavenly Gate is the point at which humankind is linked together. It is where our true nature resides, where our conscience manifests itself and where our virtues arise. This is also the doorway through which our soul enters and exits the body.

Proof of the significance of the Heavenly Gate can be found in the texts and doctrines of various religions. In Buddhism it is known as the righteous dharma hidden in the eye. In Confucianism it is known as the land of goodness. Taoists refer to it as the spirit of the valley or the mystical door. For Christians it is symbolized by the crucifix or the narrow gate. In Islam it is called the land of returning.

There are many names and descriptions but they refer to the same point, the Heavenly Gate. Sentient beings have been trapped in the worldly realm for so long that the Heavenly Gate is covered with layer upon layer of worldly dust. Because this dust obscures our true nature, the voice of our conscience is suppressed and so our conscience is weak and often fails to function properly. Our shining pearl is covered in dust and its brightness can no longer be seen. The true ruler is displaced while an unrighteous usurper ascends to the throne.

This creates a great stumbling block on the path to heaven and opens up the way to hell. Consequently, sentient beings remain trapped in the various realms of the reincarnation cycle and cannot return to meet the Heavenly Mother. Only by receiving Dao can our Heavenly Gate be opened and our true Buddha nature be found. If we persevere in our cultivation from now until we leave this world, our souls will leave our bodies through the Heavenly Gate and go directly to the Heaven of Truth.

There is an ancient saying:

“ The way of Dao is simple. People make it difficult for themselves.

To a person who is lost it is as if ten thousand mountains block their way.

When the enlightened master unlocks the Heavenly Gate, one can return to heaven with ease.

This tells us that Dao is inherent in all beings. It is our personal jewel. Unfortunately, sentient beings persist in looking for Buddha in the external world, and in doing so drift further and further away from Dao. This is what is meant in the excerpt above when it states that "people make it difficult." The foolishness and delusions of sentient beings are like mountain barriers that block their way.

When we receive Dao and our Heavenly Gate is unlocked, heaven may be far away but we can reach it in an instant. That is what is meant by the statement "One can return to heaven with great ease."

Gwan Yin, The Buddha of Mercy, said:

“ Observe the existence of the self within the bamboo forest.

Understand the mystical essence of the vase and willow.

The Bodhisattva always lives in the forest in the valley.

Remember this and do not deviate from the truth.

We all know that the Buddha of Mercy has great compassion and that she carries with her a pure white vase. She uses a sprig of willow to spray the water of truth over all sentient beings so that it will nurture them.

There is a popular legend which explains the significance of the vase and the willow. Before she became enlightened, the story goes, Gwan Yin was once a princess named Miao Shan. When Miao Shan traveled into the snowy mountains to seek Dao, she met a Taoist who gave her a white jade vase and encouraged her to put more effort into her cultivation. He told her she would reach enlightenment when the vase was filled with water and a willow grew in it.

Let us think for a moment about the essence behind the Taoist's words. What does the vase and the willow represent? Surely they refer to something more than a vase and a willow. If we examine the poem more closely we may find the answer.

Buddha Gwan Yin said, "Observe the existence of the self within the bamboo forest." The meaning of this line was explained to us after receiving Dao, so it is not necessary to explain it further. The next line says, "Understand the mystical essence of the tranquil vase and willow." What can this mean? We know that a vase cannot fill itself with water. The water must come from an outside source. The tranquil vase is not an actual vase, but a metaphor for the nose.

The poem is telling us that the Heavenly Gate must be open to receive the heavenly essence just as the vase must be empty to receive the water. When we receive Dao and have our Heavenly Gate pointed out by the *Dien Chuan Shr*, this allows us to be able to receive the "refreshing dew" or the "water of truth."

The next line of the poem says, "The Bodhisattva always lives in the forest in the valley." This means that within each of us there dwells a Buddha of Mercy. If we take a look at the character for "valley", ( ) it becomes clear that it refers to the Heavenly Gate that is set within a bamboo forest.

The last line tells us not to deviate from the principle of truth. When we have found the Buddha within, we need to be with it and follow its guidance at all times. We can also emulate the great compassion of Buddha Gwan Yin by helping sentient beings and showing them sympathy and care. In this way we can help to resolve the pain and problems of others. This is the principle that true Dao cultivators abide by.

Now we can more clearly see that the pointing out of the Heavenly Gate is a truly priceless and incomparable jewel. This is where the Buddha within us dwells, and from here we make our connection with heaven. If we cultivate sincerely, when the time comes we can depart for heaven with a smile and leave behind a body that is as soft and supple as if it were peacefully sleeping. This is what happens when the soul can make its exit through the Heavenly Gate and return to heaven free from the cycle of life and death.

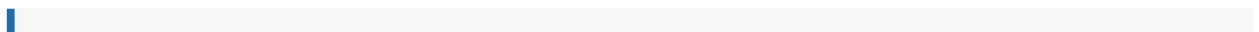
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## 2. The Holy Mantra

The Holy Mantra is passed on to us in the form of the spoken word, but must be imprinted on the heart and not spoken. The words of this sutra will never be found in any scriptural text or doctrine. That is why cultivators in the past had to travel thousands of miles to find an enlightened master who could pass it on to them.

The mantra has had a different form at different stages of time. We are now in the white period and it is Maitreya Buddha who supports us and gives us protection at this time. The Holy Mantra is passed on so that cultivators in the white stage who face life-threatening dangers can reach for help.

In one of the Holy Teachings, the Buddha stated that:



Once the Holy Mantra is used, Buddhas and Immortals will all respond and arrive to help.

The Holy Mantra has a very powerful effect. Do not underestimate it. Please memorize it and treasure it always. It also bears the essence of a direct way of cultivation that we can discuss in the future.

To summarize, the Holy Mantra is the mantra of great brightness and tranquility whose mystical effect is boundless.

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### 3. The Hand Seal – Unification Seal

In ancient times royal officials carried special seals as proof of their position. In cultivating Dao, we need the contract or the seal of God. It is the verification that we have received Dao and acknowledges that we are the children of the Heavenly Mother.

When we hold the hand seal, heaven, earth and humankind are united. This seal also enables us to transcend calamities and ultimately leads us back to our origin.

Jesus said:

“ Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. (Mark 10:15)

When Jesus says "child" he is not referring simply to children but also to the third treasure, which encompasses the qualities of childhood innocence. When we receive Dao, we are given the third treasure and recognize that we are the children of our Heavenly Mother.

But having received this gift, we need to cultivate, to purify our souls, curb our selfish desires and shed our vices in order to return to the original, pure heart of a child. Returning to this tranquil state we acquire, once again, our innocent original character and features. Only then can we go home to the Kingdom of God.

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## Conclusion

When we receive Dao, we are given the three treasures. This is a real and eternal gain. The ancient Chinese character for "gain" is (4). It means to "discover an inch." There is a Chinese proverb that says "There is a square inch of treasure land". This is the land of our heart.

The treasure land that is opened to us when we receive Dao is a gift for all time. The material riches we gain in our lives—wealth, reputation, and pleasures—are not true riches because they are impermanent. Remember the words of Confucius?

“ When we receive Dao in the morning, we can die in the evening with no regrets.

This shows once again that receiving Dao and seeing that square inch of treasure land is truly a precious and eternal gain. Hopefully we will treasure and cherish it.

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Revision #3

Created 2025-08-09 22:35:10 UTC by Phil

Updated 2025-08-10 00:47:14 UTC by Phil