

How to Be a Good Influence

December 24, 2014

It's Christmas Eve. They talk about goodwill, and usually goodwill is expressed as lots of presents.

But actually what it comes down to is that you wish for the other person's happiness, and you look for every opportunity you can to help that person become happy.

That's what goodwill for another person means. Now, even though we try to spread goodwill around to everybody, we can't give the same amount of attention to everybody. But we can express goodwill in one particular way that has a wide-ranging effect, and that's by being a good example.

There's a passage where the Buddha says, "May no one ever despise anyone or mistreat anyone." That's an expression of goodwill. And how do you get people to treat one another right? You treat them right. Set a good example. This example is a gift that you can give to everybody.

You can give material presents only to a certain number of people because you only have so much material wealth. But what they call noble wealth—the good qualities you develop in the mind—doesn't have to have any limits on it at all.

So it's entirely up to you what you want to develop inside. Then the influence spreads out to others. They see a good example that not everybody in the human race is grubby or greedy, that there are people who behave in a noble and dignified way—people who have a sense of honor, people who have a sense of restraint.

Those are qualities that are sadly lacking in our world right now, but the more that we can develop them within ourselves, the more we can be a good influence on the people around us.

So goodwill is not just waves of cotton-candy or pink clouds to be sent out in all directions. It's actually an expression of how you want to be a good influence on the world. And given, as I said, that our material wealth has its limits, you want to focus on the wealth of the mind. Because that way, everybody benefits.