

Confucius Teaching on Building A Happy Life (1)

- a foundation for Mahayana Buddhism practice

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Good Things Should Be Shared With Good Friends

Good Morning! Today we are going to talk about 'Building A Happy Life'. My dear friends, happiness is what everyone is pursuing. Each one of us desires happiness. But, how do we make our lives happy? We have gone through decades in our lives, do you feel happy? Many of you smiled, Smiles are a sign of happiness. Have you ever been awakened by your own smile? Yes. Would anyone like to share with us why you were awakened by your smile? What is the reason? Can you generate more of this kind of pleasantness in your life? If we run our lives this way, we will be happier and happier.

What makes you happy even just thinking of it? Would anyone like to share with us your happiness? No one would like to share? Well, good things should be shared with good friends. When we share good things with good friends, do you have a sense of happiness? That is because it is better to give than to receive. Actually some of you have shared with your friends and brought them here after benefiting from this class. Anyone? When we bring along our friends to learn this important life lesson, how would we feel? Very happy! If our friends have learned how to educate their children to be filial, and their children indeed have become filial, our friends would wake up with a smile even at midnight. Not only do we enjoy our own happiness but share with others.

Where Does Happiness Come From?

My dear friends, when you look back, you may find that all the happiness you have had is actually due to making the right decisions. The most difficult thing in life is not 'striving for success' but 'making decisions'. My friends, how many right decisions have you made in your life? We have to make decisions all the time. Are you making decisions right now? If you're thinking 'I am so tired today, might as well doze off a little'. The effect between dozing off and listening to the class attentively would be completely different. As an old saying goes, "Men fear choosing the wrong career, women fear marrying the wrong man." Both things in this saying are about making decisions. Since men fear choosing the wrong career, what right decision do they

need to make? Career! Women fear marrying the wrong man, what right decision do they have to make? Choosing the right husband.

There is a common point between these two, that is, we must be very good at judging people. Because, not only do you need to make a right career decision, but you need to choose the right leader to follow, for a right leader would help and facilitate your success. Is the ability to judge people important? Very important! Would you be happy if you married the wrong man? Very difficult! If you follow the right leader, you will have better advancement in your career. Furthermore, your family will be stable. Thus, you must make the right decisions to obtain happiness.

How Do We Create A Happy Family?

What other decisions do we need to make for our lives? Those who have had breakfast, please raise your hand. Quite a few! Please put your hand down. Please raise your hand if you have not. Some of you have not. My friends, skipping breakfast is the first step of moving toward bad health. By making the right decision, you will have good health; vice versa, you will have bad health. If you don't have good health, will you have a happy life? Certainly not! Only when you make many right decisions in your life, can you then walk the path of happiness. Therefore, choosing what to eat or not is very important as well, so is choosing friends. "One relies on parents at home, on friends when out." Let's think about it, what is the biggest worry of a wife and parents? Their biggest worry is the husband or children choosing the wrong friends. If one hangs out with the wrong friends, his wife will not eat well, sleep well; nor will his parents. So, one must know how to choose the right friends in order to obtain happiness in his life. Only when one makes right friends, can he then have a happy family.

What Is the Priority In One's Life?

In addition, to choose the priority is also a decision that we have to make in life. What should be done first, what can be done later, the decision of their order must be made correctly. We often say, "Nothing is more important than educating children." The most important matter in life is to educate our children. If your children were not properly educated, would you obtain happiness in life? Whether one's life would be at ease or blessed, it depends if his children are filial to him in his elderly life. If the children are not filial, what would happen in his senior age? His time will be very hard to pass. He would have no idea what trouble the child will make today to let him clean up the mess. If you regard educating children as the most important thing, you have chosen the right priority. But, how do we educate our children?

What Is Education In Parents' Minds Nowadays?

My friends, how do we teach our children properly? What is education in parents' minds today? "Leading by actions". Let's give this friend a big applause. This answer usually will not come from a woman in her 30s or 40s, usually comes from a senior. I remember when I was giving a lecture in Malaysia, I asked parents what is education? One of the parents very honestly said, "Obtaining full marks in exams." Well, this parent deserves a big hand, for he is not hypocritical at all. He spoke his mind. In my teaching career, I Made sure of good communication with parents. During the first meeting, I would ask them, "In your opinion, what is the most important matter in education? Is teaching the attitude towards people & matters important or is improving their grades from 98 to 100 more important?" Is the former or the latter more important? The first one or the second one? The first one? So far, I have never heard the answer of the second one. Are our parents wise? It sounds very wise, right? But, let's observe, do most parents endeavor their efforts on the first one or the second one? The second one. "What score you got this time? Bring your paper over." You see, you only have exam marks in your mind.

Where Does Academic Elitism Push Our Children To?

Dear parents, we must introspect ourselves. We always tell our children to be consistent in speaking and actions. But, why do we clearly feel teaching them to deal with people and matters is more important, yet endeavoring on exam marks? Why? In fact, the parents should not be blamed, for they have yet to recognize how far the right attitude will impact their children's lives. But they can see the score immediately and proudly show off to others, saying my son got 100 in 3 or 4 subjects. We must think with a calm mind. Today, if we push our children to focus on exam results, what kind of life would he have? Can you see it? When you push your children to this path, you must be clear, where are you pushing them to? "A life of pursuing fame and profit."

Dear parents, I am also a product of academic elitism, can you tell? You are so kind that you do not want to harm me in person. I am really a product of academic elitism. I remember in junior high school. I cried for hours because of a 98 score. Why? Because I was 2 points short to be in the elite class. I was thinking, "What if I was not qualified for that class, isn't my life doomed?" Would it be so serious? Then, why did I feel it was so serious? You see, we worried about personal gain and loss so much even at just the age of junior high. When a child is anxious about loss and gain, will he be happy in this life? No, he will constantly worry about this and that, A child with academic elitism in mind will only focus on how to improve his scores and beat others' scores. My heart should have been as big as Fan Zhongyan, the famous statesman of

the Song Dynasty. “Worry for the world’s troubles before others do, and only enjoy happiness after others have.” However, due to elitism, I was only thinking of beating others.

What Will A High Academic Degree Bring To Your Children?

Recalling my high school age, I was always nosy about others’ scores. If they had a higher score, how did I feel? Extremely uncomfortable! With such a narrow mind, would I have a happy life? We must deeply contemplate! After graduating from college, I met a junior high classmate in a shop. I remember he was always first place in the elite class. After graduating from college, due to poor social skills caused from focusing on studying, he would be shivering when talking about his work. He asked, “Why are people so horrific? I am so scared to interact with them.” His ability of dealing with people is incredibly poor, thus a lack of an inclusive heart. His life is unlikely to have happiness.

Let’s think deeper, we push our children to academic success, many have reached the degree of Master or PhD. Yet, which degree possesses the highest unemployment rate today? People who graduate under high school are unlikely to lose jobs. Why? Because they are willing to do manual labor and would not become unemployed. People with high qualifications above Bachelor often complain of not enough money, and are not willing to take jobs. My friends, what attitude does a high academic degree bring to them? They are not able to bend themselves to a low position. We must learn bending before stretching to a higher position.

Why Would One Miss The Best Opportunity In Front of Him?

There are so many college graduates every year, but a lot of them are unemployed. Right? Let’s think again, these graduates have received over ten years’ education under this system, but they cannot put what they have learned to use. If you or your friends are a business owner, a supervisor, or even in charge of a government department, you can ask yourself or them, “Are there any talents among youngsters?” The answer you will get is likely to be: I can’t find talents. The education-machine keeps producing graduates, yet the entrepreneurs cannot find proper talent.

Dear parents, if you told your children to ‘just focus on exams, no need to do house chores, just focus on exams, once you graduate from college, I guarantee you a happy life’. Have any of you made this promise to your children? Well, your check will bounce. This is like telling them, your life will proceed smoothly if you study well. No such thing! It does not exist now, neither in the past. Even graduating from college, if one does not know how to get along with others, he will miss even the best opportunity coming to him. When we tell our children to neglect everything but studying, they will lack a sense of responsibility. Only when a child has a sense of responsibility, can he then shoulder the burden. If you tell him just focus on studying, for whom

will he be studying? For whom? For parents. Such kind of studying would be completely different from the studying of a filial child. A filial child will let their parents rest assured. He bears in mind of providing good lives for his parents in the future, thus he keeps improving his virtues and abilities. This kind of child has great potential. If you take a survey, you will find out, many successful people were not top students in their school life.

What Kind of Talents Do Entrepreneurs Need?

Let's look from a different perspective, Entrepreneurs feel that there are no talents. What kind of talents do they really need? We do not need to ask a PhD for an answer, each of us has the answer in our mind. Throughout our lives, we have seen many successful people and those who have failed. In your eyes, what traits must a successful person have? Would anyone like to share? Don't think only people with high education can obtain answers. Many answers arise from a calm mind. As a saying goes, "Wisdom arises from a pure heart." What traits do you think can lead you to a successful life? Honesty, sense of responsibility, humility. Anything else? Trustworthiness, patience. Okay, we can publish a book called ***The Traits of Success***. I am not lying to you, You will find similar information in the bookstores. Since we know the real talents need these traits, allow me to ask, have we taught our children to be honest? Many parents agree with this point, but they are afraid that their children will be bullied if they are too honest. Their faith is certainly a moot point. "What if my children are oppressed for being too humble?" Therefore, faith is fundamental. Do you genuinely believe that he will get a real successful life with these traits?

Why Should We Treat Not Only the Existing Illness But the Future Illness?

In fact, entrepreneurs have discovered this truth. In the past few decades, western society has stressed on quality management. What quality? The quality of the products. They called it 'Total Quality Management'. For example, making a microphone, they believe that as long as safeguarding their products to be competitive, they can then be free from worries. Therefore, the products have become their focal point. In recent ten or twenty years, something happened. In 1995, an over 200-year-old British bank, Barings Bank, went bankrupt because a futures trader in Singapore embezzled. A two hundred years foundation had collapsed.

My dear friends, western philosophy tends to deal with the symptoms of a problem. Is dealing with symptoms a good solution? Not really. For instance, if we are ill with cancer, is it easy to be cured by just taking care of symptoms? Not really. Chinese philosophy is 'Not only to treat the illness that has happened but also treat the future illness'. Which means to prevent illness before it happens. Although science and technology are highly developed in the West, they

specifically treat the symptoms. They cut their stomach when having gastric cancer, cut liver with liver problems. Are they free from trouble then? No, the problem might transfer to other places. We should not antagonize the cancer cells. The reason they become rampant is because they are spoiled by someone. Who spoiled the cancer cells? Dear friends, we all have cancer cells in our bodies, they become rampant because you spoil them, you have been abusing your body for ten, fifteen years. This body is not that easy to be ruined because it is very intricate. You won't resolve the root cause of illness by removing cancer cells. Not only is the problem not solved but side-effects arise. Many cancer patients found that their life is unbearable after receiving modern treatment. Let's use an analogy to explain this approach of dealing with cancer. When we dump a bag of garbage that attracts many flies. You are annoyed by so many flies, you then used pesticides to kill them all. You thought the problem is solved. Ten minutes later, more flies appear. People today only think to resolve the symptoms. This boyfriend or girlfriend is no good, change another one. Was the problem solved? It is not the boyfriend or girlfriend 'no good'. Who is no good? When we do not learn being inclusive and loving others, when this basic issue does not get resolved, it is futile no matter how many lovers you change. That's why we need to solve a problem from its root.

Can Spending A Lot of Money Grasp the Core of Education?

Now people in the West have realized that there is something else more important and influential to the company than producing competitive products, which is the virtues of their staff. In 2001, the seventh biggest enterprise in the world, Enron Corporation, with annual earnings of hundreds of billions, went bankrupt due to embezzlement by two senior officers. Many major international companies are now promoting TEM, Total Ethics Management. They are demanding to improve the moral quality of employees. Can this solve the problem? Do the westerners think that the problem can be solved? My friends, People today have a wrong perception, they think money is omnipotent. They think, "As long as I have money, I can offer good education to my children and solve all my problems." Are there many people having this kind of perception? Yes, there are. Well, Americans have boldness of vision, in order to promote moral and ethical education they allocated a grant in 2002, from \$2.5 billion increasing to \$7.5 billion dollars. An exact 3 times increase. Did it work? Aren't they ambitious?

In the meantime they surveyed over 8000 junior high students. The result shows, 71% of the students had cheated in exams, 68% had bullied others and 35% had shoplifted. There was a question at the end of the questionnaire: Do you think you have high moral standards? Surprisingly, 96% of the students answered 'Yes'. My dear friends, there were 71% who had cheated on exams, 68% had bullied others and 35% had shoplifted, yet 96% think that they were of high moral standard. May I ask, whose standards do they follow? Who is his standard?

Himself. Please tell me, from whom do these students learn this attitude? If a state leader randomly waged wars against other countries and told the children not to fight, would the children listen to his teaching? Of course not. Did they master the core of education?

How Does Grasping the Core of Education Create A Happy Life For Our Children?

Education will not work by spending a lot of money, by giving a lot of speeches or by publishing a lot of books in theories. The core of the education is explained in *The Graphs & Analyses of Chinese Characters*. What is education? Education is 'The above demonstrate good examples while the below emulates', it also means 'raise children to enable them to do good'. Such a short interpretation has pointed out the core of education. My dear friends, the faith in our ancestors' wisdom absolutely hinges on your in-depth study of the classic scriptures. If you truly comprehend and accept our ancestors' teaching, your admiration will go deeper as you read more and more. So, the key of education is to teach the right concepts, which is 'enable them to do good'. When our children are kind-hearted, they will naturally have good deeds. In consequence, they will naturally have many good friends, and no doubt will obtain a happy life. How do we teach our children to do good deeds? It is certainly not by asking them to read a lot of books, but by demanding ourselves to implement the sage teachings. When we practice and show good deeds, our children will be imperceptibly influenced and moved. Dear friends, do you believe in what I have just said? Some of you believe, some of you seem not. If you do not, please think calmly, is it because no good people surrounding you ever perform good deeds that touch you? Otherwise, the surrounding people would be touched as long as someone truly performs it. I dare to guarantee you, because 'People at birth are innately good'. As long as there is someone performing, there must be people who will be touched and further emulate them.

To Know Shame Is Akin To Courage

In Shenzhen, China, a teacher who had learned Chinese traditional culture for a while. I met her when I was invited to give lectures on March 15 last year. At that time, she asked the sponsor, "What is the topic of the lectures?" "It will be *Dizigui-the guidelines for being a good person.*" She responded, "What does he talk about that for? Isn't that for children to learn? Why doesn't he talk about *Analects*?" Although disagreeing with the topic, she still participated in the first class. After the class she suddenly felt that she had not fulfilled many basics of being a good person. She therefore adjusted her attitude and seriously learned *Dizigui*. She said before learning *Dizigui*, she had studied many classics, thus regarded herself as deep-rooted in goodness. She confessed that she even admired herself sometimes.

After learning *Dizigui*, she felt ashamed of not even fulfilling basic filial piety. She deeply introspects herself. My friends, which is better, feeling deep-rooted in goodness of herself or learning nothing well? The first one or the second one? The first one shows that she lived in a state of topsy-turvy. The second one shows: she has realized that 'To know shame is akin to courage'. We often say, "Cultivation is to correct our behavior". Only when discovering our own faults, can we then become more clear of the Truth. We must determine to become a person who is clear of the truth by rectifying mistakes, this can then be called 'a genuine cultivation'.

How A Mother's Wordless Teaching Touches Her Son Deeply?

On Mother's Day in May, this teacher went back to her hometown. She put her learning to practice. It happened to be her birthday, she wanted to show her gratitude to her parents' grace of raising her. What comes to children's minds on their birthday nowadays? Cake! Anything else? Well, 'Teaching and enabling our children to do good'. Allow me to ask, is first thinking of cake a 'good deed'? You see, children's reaction has shown the result of our education. We must inspect with a calm mind. Is this seed we sow right or wrong? We must reflect meticulously. Such a good teaching moment, we should teach our children to have the first thought of 'birthday is the suffering day of a mother', teaching them to remember their mothers' hardship of conceiving and giving birth to them. So that they will arise the heart of knowing and repaying the grace of their mother. This is education.

Upon returning home, she wanted to show her gratitude to her parents. She pulled over three chairs and invited her grandma, father and mother to sit down. Her mother was quite sensitive and asked, "Daughter, what on earth are you doing?" She replied to these three elders, "I have lived over thirty years in my life and caused you many worries. Since having now started to learn sage teachings, I have determined to be a filial daughter and never let you worry again. I will always keep in my mind your grace of raising me. It happens to be my birthday today, I must thank my parents properly. Please allow me to give you the traditional etiquette, kneeling down thrice and kowtowing nine times."

At the sight of her daughter's first kneeling, the mother immediately bursted into tears. My friends, what kind of tears were these? Tears of joy and comfort. A mother never thinks of anything in return from her children. However, when a child has such a thought, she will be so happy and comforted. Who are the most silly people in the world? Mothers are the easiest to be cajoled. They do not ask anything in return, as long as you give some sweet words, some filial actions, they will be so...satisfied.

When she was kneeling down the second time, her third grade son walked to her husband's side at once and started to massage his father. He seemed to feel odd if doing nothing under this atmosphere. This is a wordless teaching. The filial action of this mother had strongly

influenced her son who felt a need of serving his father at this moment. The power of this imperceptible teaching by leading a good example is mighty. When coming back home, this child said naturally upon entering the door, “Dad, Mom, next year on my birthday, I will do kneeling to you two as well.” This is education. The below emulates what the above does. Does it cost any money? When it comes to the truly important matters in life, money is not very useful.

Can ‘Embracing Buddha’s Feet’ Help to Solve Problems From Its Root?

At this point let’s recall what we mentioned before. People in the West have now realized the importance of virtue, that was after the problem had occurred. Now they try to resolve the problems, but do they know what is the foundation of all virtues? To solve the problem, we must tackle with the root cause. Many corporations have spent a considerable amount of money on training their staff. This is like a Chinese saying, “To embrace Buddha’s feet and pray for help in time of emergency”. Is it possible to teach a person to be cordial and courteous in two months? If one always acts cool and does not smile, and he is trained to smile at people in two months; his clients might get goosebumps when they see him smile, because the smile is very unnatural. Behind the smile, what he thinks of is how do I get money from your pocket to mine. That smile is not out of his genuine respect to others.

What Is A Sacred Undertaking?

At what age do Chinese people start to establish the foundation of virtues for their children? To establish the foundation of virtues it must start from young. As **Three Character Cannon** states, “With no education there would be anomalies.” It would be very difficult to drag them back to the right course if we did not teach them from their young age. So we must start education from children’s young age. There is an important phrase in **The Book of Changes/I Ching**, “Nurturing righteous minds from a child’s primordial state is a sacred undertaking.” ‘Primordial state’ here implies when the world was just formed, all things were very fragile needing protection and nurturing. If we apply this concept to children’s education, it means that we should nurture children’s great righteous spirit and their right attitude of dealing with people and matters. When we do so, this merit is most sacred. If you raise a child to become like Fan Zhongyan, it is a sacred merit. Is it easy to bring up a child like Fan Zhongyan today? How could it not be easy? Nowadays, if we bring up a very filial child, he will be outstanding, just like ‘a red bud in the midst of thick foliage’.

What A Beautiful Pre-Meal Prayer!

We recruited many children to learn sage teachings in Shenzhen. When they went back to their hometown, all elders raised their eyebrows, for they’d never seen today’s children giving 90

degree bows. They arose a deep veneration and were very happy. Just wondering if they gave a bigger red-envelope? Ha ha... One time a child was having a meal with a group of people. The elders started to pick up food upon seeing dishes on the table. Suddenly, they saw this child lowering his head and murmuring some words. They stopped their actions, feeling a bit awkward. After this child had finished, they asked, "What were you murmuring? Why didn't you eat quickly?" This child replied to all the elders, "I was reciting a pre-meal prayer to thank parents' grace of raising me, the teacher's endeavor of teaching me, the farmers' hard labor of growing food as well as all devoted people." Those elders had learned a lesson with chopsticks in their hands, "How can this child keep gratitude in mind while we only think of food?" Dear friends, is this child happy? He who lives in gratitude is especially happy. When we can truly teach our children to be good, he will surely influence many people and become a contemporary Fan Zhongyan. We must focus our education on 'nurturing righteous minds from a child's primordial state'.

How Do We Place Our Children In An Invincible Position?

When our children had rooted the sage wisdom, will you still worry of unemployment after his graduation? If you still worry, you are like 'the man of Qi worrying the sky might fall'. You must have a broad vision to obtain a grand life; if narrow-minded you will worry about loss and gain your whole life. Recently, a friend of mine told me many big companies went to an organization that particularly promotes Confucianism to recruit young talents. These entrepreneurs said, "Many youngsters nowadays are not trustworthy and lack a sense of responsibility, they were always on tenterhooks after hiring them." That's why they take initiative to recruit talents from a sage teachings' organization. Dear parents, if the foundation your children are rooting now is how to interact with others and deal with matters, you have placed them in an invincible position.

Farsighted and Aim High To Inherit and Pass Down Life Wisdom

Okay! We have just mentioned the order of education. My dear friends, the decisions that you make now will not only affect you but your family. If we extend our vision, not only your family, your descendants for generations will be affected as well. My friends, please raise your hand if you ever think that your decision will affect your offspring for generations. Great! Let's give these friends a big applause. Life is like playing chess. If you only think of the next move, you will hesitate over every move. Will this move work? Is that okay? If you can plan your life as playing chess with the vision of 100, even 200 moves, your life will be at ease with elegance. Your children will be farsighted and aim high.

When one realizes that his decisions will affect generations, I believe he will be very cautious and attentive to education, because he is farsighted. Not too many people think so far these days. In ancient China did anyone think this far? Yes, many of them. Chinese have the most 'family admonition' among the worlds. As we know, ***Liao Fan's Four Lessons, The Maxims of Zhu Bolu for Managing the Family, The Family Instructions of Master Yan, and The Letter of Admonition to My Son***, Zhuge Liang. Many sages had the attitude of inheriting and passing down life wisdom. Therefore, we must realize that our decisions are very important. But, what do we need in order to make right decisions in life?

My grandfather is illiterate, has never gone to school, he was a fisherman. All his siblings are fishermen. Not only are his siblings fishermen, all their children became fishermen before junior high graduation. With children's help, my uncles' lives became much easier. Is this good? Their lives seemed to improve right away, right? However, my grandfather felt that it will be a regret not having life wisdom due to being uneducated. He insisted on his children going to school no matter encountering how much hardship. Because of this decision, this judgment, my grandfather raised one PhD, three Bachelors and one high school graduate; to my generation, all above Bachelors, in which there are two PhDs. These are all caused by my grandfather's decision. In my generation, my degree is the lowest, so is my height. As elders, we must be cautious on our judgment and decisions.

All right, we will also make a decision to end our class now. Thank you everyone!