

Confucius Teachings On Building A Happy Life (5)

- a foundation for Mahayana Buddhism practice

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Hello, my friends. In the last lesson, we talked about two very important areas in a family. One is finances, namely the material aspects of living; the other is spiritual life, namely children's education. We also mentioned that, in the majority of families today, both husband and wife work. As a result, children's education is left to after school tutors, nannies, or grandparents. Where can we see one's wisdom? From what he accepts and what he rejects. We will gain only when we can sacrifice. Would you rather make a little less money, and spend more time educating your children, or would you rather make more money and neglect your children's education? The results that you get will surely be different.

Can Affluence Help Children Earn a Good Life?

Let's make a comparison between the last generation, people in their 50s and 60s, and our generation, people in their 20s and 30s. The last generation has a strong sense of responsibility and filial piety. What about our generation? My friends, you don't need to be polite, you can say it directly. Do we still have these life attitudes of the last generation? Have we improved or fallen behind? (Audience: Fallen behind). Is the last generation wealthier or the current generation? (Audience: This generation). But why have we fallen behind in our life attitudes when we are wealthier? You see, money does not necessarily solve problems.

In my father's generation, most people were very poor. Due to their poverty, they were particularly thrifty. I remember when I was young, during mealtimes, who ate all of the leftovers? My mother and father, because they were used to not wasting any food. So, life with more difficulty, first of all, leads to the habit of thriftiness. Secondly, the harder one's life is, the more they will feel grateful to their parents and love their siblings. My parents' generation, they studied very hard without their parents pushing them. They were all very self-motivated because they wanted to be successful so that they could one day help their parents live better lives. You see, poverty and thriftiness help develop one's aspirations and filial piety. Therefore, we must be thankful for poverty.

People in this generation, from a young age, have enjoyed wealthy lives. We can get whatever we want, and we are used to splurging and spending money. In addition, we do not know how to practice filial piety, plus we never experience much hardship or responsibility. The younger generation today, not only do they spend all their own money, but whose money do they also spend? (Audience: Their parents!) How do you all know? Young people today like consumerism

and enjoyment to what degree? One month's salary, as soon as they get it, what do they do? "Come, let's go shopping!"

They probably spend an entire month's salary in the first 15 days. How do they survive afterward? For the rest of the month, they probably buy instant noodles, eating them one by one. After a while, when they can no longer stand it, they go look for their dad, say, "Dad, all my money is gone". The father is very angry and says, "I told you not to spend so recklessly. You don't listen! Well! How much do you need?" The father will still give them money. You see, an affluent life does not necessarily help your child develop the correct attitude towards life.

What Should We Leave to Our Children When Passing Away?

In ancient times, many scholars saw this point clearly. Liu Bang, the first emperor of the Han dynasty in China, awarded plots of land to over a hundred subordinates who helped him establish the dynasty. After one hundred years, a historian of the Han dynasty suddenly had the idea, "Let me investigate how the descendants of these over one hundred subordinates are doing today after one hundred years. The historian was shocked to find out that basically most of the descendants had fallen. Many had already become so poor that they roamed the streets begging for food. Only a few of the subordinates' descendants still led good lives. One of these subordinates was named Xiao He. When being awarded a piece of land, Xiao He chose a very infertile plot. Because with infertile land, one will have no harvest if he does not work hard. Xiao He was very wise and farsighted, he wanted his offspring to understand the values of diligence and thriftiness. The descendants of other subordinates who had rich lands became very lazy. Moreover, their rich lands caused much covet among others and made them a target. Many schemes were devised to undermine them. Xiao He could see, do not leave a fortune for your descendants, it is more important to leave your descendants with wisdom and set a good example for them.

Mr. Sima Guang* once said (*A Chinese historian of the North Song dynasty), "Leaving money to descendants, they might not be able to keep it; leaving books to them, they might not be able to read them; for the long run, it is better to leave them with hidden merits (*Good deeds that will benefit his descendants or the next life of his own)". There is a very important teaching in *I Ching/Book of Changes* which states, "Families that accumulate hidden merits will have fortune lasting for generations". One's unknown good deeds will definitely shelter his descendants. Apart from sheltering our descendants, when we are doing good deeds, we are also setting a good example for our offspring. This is the way that parents with wisdom will choose to care for their descendants.

In my father's generation, with five siblings, their life had more hardship. They all studied hard without my grandparents nagging them and got along very harmoniously. Therefore, as long as the basic necessities are met, we should develop our children's wisdom and spiritual lives. We can run a family very well even without much money.

Is it true that a family will have less income if there is only one parent working? Will it end up having more money if both parents work? Many families with both parents working still have not much money saved. They might lend money to a friend on one hand and fall victim to a scam on the other hand. We must understand, what is the real cause of wealth? What kind of life must

we lead in order to earn wealth? We must understand these principles, otherwise, it is very likely that we will not be left with much, even after a lifetime of hard work.

What Is the Fundamental Reason for A Person to Be Wealthy?

In ancient times, the Chinese wealth-deity, Fan Li, also known as Tao Zhugong. He lived in the Spring and Autumn Period. Together with Wen Zhong, Fan Li assisted Gou Jian, the king of Yue, in restoring his kingdom. After the kingdom was restored, Fan Li told Wen Zhong, "The King of Yue is someone with whom we can endure hardship but not enjoy prosperity together". Fan Li was very good at judging a person's character. You see, being able to judge a person's character is very important. If we lack this judgment, we might suffer throughout life. However, Wen Zhong did not know how to judge people. He was unwilling to give up the coming reward, hence he did not leave. In the end, he was ordered to commit suicide by the King of Yue. Meanwhile, Fan Li moved to Jiangnan, changed his name, and started a business. He started from a small business and became very wealthy soon after. He immediately donated all of his money to the poor. After another few years, he again became wealthy. And he donated all his money to the poor once again, starting over again from a small business. It was recorded in history as, "three times accumulating wealth, three times distributing wealth".

Why does a person have wealth? The fundamental reason lies in the fact that he is willing to give it away. What Fan Li did was in accordance with the sages' teachings. It is stated in *The Great Learning*, "Distributing wealth will bring people together." When we give away wealth, what comes to us? Others' respect and love. As a result, whatever business you do, they will support you and give you their patronage. Because you have won their hearts. Giving away wealth does not mean that the wealth is gone. It may no longer be visible, but under the right conditions, wealth will appear again. Let's take a look, wealth is the effect, there must be causes and conditions. The 'cause' is wealth-dana (*donation), the 'conditions' are our efforts along with help from benefactors and the right opportunities, the 'effect' of wealth will naturally arrive. So, we should follow the proper way to manage the wealth of our families. Otherwise, it is more than likely that our entire life's efforts will result in nothing.

My sister quit her job as a public officer after she became pregnant. Many of our relatives and friends felt pity for her. Even her mother-in-law often told her, "Go to work. I'll look after the child for you". However, there are gains and losses in life. After quitting her job, my sister stayed at my mother's home waiting for childbirth and for postnatal care. Then she undertook a mother's duty to take care of her child. My brother-in-law was the only breadwinner in the family after my sister quit her job. But he earns more and more money.

Why does he earn more and more? Because with the money that my brother-in-law gives to my sister, she often said to me, "I do not need so much since I mostly stay at home. Please help me print the Classics and do some good deeds with this money". You see, my sister knows how to donate wealth for her husband, her husband thus earns more and more money. One time, they were shopping together in a big supermarket. It happened to be the grand opening, and everyone was invited to a prize drawing. The first-place prize was a new car. My sister wrote down her information and entered the drawing. Not long after, the supermarket called her and said, "Ms. Tsai, you have won a car!" If a person knows how to donate wealth, "What is in his

destiny will eventually come”. It is not that more people working will bring more money. You must know how ‘to plant the seeds of wealth by donation’.

Inner Wealth and Outer Wealth

Many people would say, “I have no money. How do I plant the seeds of wealth by donation?” Well, wealth does not only refer to monetary wealth. It in fact includes ‘inner wealth’ and ‘outer wealth’. If we work very hard, this is inner wealth. Our labor, working experience, and wisdom are all inner wealth. Outer wealth refers to money, property, and belongings. These can all be used as wealth-dana (*Buddhist term for a donation of wealth). Is it the more money we give away, the more good fortune we accumulate? Not necessarily!

I once read a news report about an elderly farming couple. They had accumulated some life savings. It just so happened that there was a new hospital being built in their area. The couple donated their life savings to buy an ambulance for the hospital. Compared to an entrepreneur who donated hundreds of thousands of Yuan, if these farmers donated the same amount, who accumulated more good fortune? The farmers gave away their entire life’s savings. How many people will their true love benefit? In comparison, the same amount of money to the entrepreneur is just a fraction. A Chinese saying goes, “The field of good fortune is plowed with our good thoughts”. When we give wholeheartedly, no matter how much money it is, we will reap infinite good fortune.

Why Does a 2 Cent Donation Earn More Merits Than a Thousand Silver Taels?

In ancient times, there was a woman who happened to pass by a Buddhist temple. She went into the temple and piously bowed to the statue of the Buddha. But she only had two pennies with her. She gave all of it away. The abbot saw it and was very moved by her good intention. So much so that he personally chanted Amitabha, prayed, and transferred the merits on her behalf. Sometime later, she was wed into the royal family and became wealthy. She brought thousands of silver taels to the temple as a donation. But this time, the abbot did not come out, just sent one of his disciples to read sutras and dedicate the merits for her. This woman was very curious and thought to herself, “Last time, I only donated 2 cents; this time, I brought thousands of silver taels. For the two cents, the abbot himself prayed and dedicated merits for me; but this time, I brought so much more, and he just asked his disciple to do it for me”. This woman had wisdom, she knew to ask in order to find out the reason. She took the initiative to consult with the abbot. The abbot said, “The two cents you donated last time came from your utmost sincerity. If I had not come out to transfer the merits for you in person, I would have forsaken you. This time you brought so much silver, but your intention is not as sincere as before. It was sufficient to have a disciple monk pray for you”.

So, the root cause for the field of a person’s good fortune is his intentions. As long as we constantly have the thoughts of donating wealth to help others, we are accumulating good fortune little by little. Once we have a correct understanding of wealth, we will no longer worry about our losses and gains, nor will we feel anxious when seeing others make a lot of money. If we cultivate a solid foundation of wealth-dana (*Buddhist term for a donation of wealth), the good effect will naturally emerge.

The Values of A Wife

We have discussed the financial aspect of running a family, next is educating children. In this aspect, the husband and wife should establish a common understanding. Of course, the most important element in education is leading by example. The Chinese ancients advocated that women live in accordance with the practice of the 'three amenability and four virtues'. In which it implies that 'a husband should be righteous while the wife follows'. This means that as a husband, one must be grateful, compassionate, and righteous. He must practice these virtues so that he can be a good role model for his children.

If a person is grateful to his own parents, his children will understand and practice filial piety. A husband should also maintain a sense of compassion towards his wife. The wife works just as tirelessly as him, it is not easy for her to manage a family. So he should always be grateful and keep in mind his wife's efforts and contributions. There is one contribution of a wife that her husband can never match. That is to help us continue the ancestral lineage. This is a very important mission. Can a husband do it by himself? No way! There is no other person who can take over this role, we must be grateful. As a husband, if he keeps in mind his wife's irreplaceable contribution and maintains a constant sense of gratitude, would they have a bad relationship? Impossible. To our children, we have moral responsibility. The children must be educated properly. This is the responsibility and duty of the parents.

With Women's Four Virtues:

A Good Wife Can Bring Prosperity to Three Generations

A wife should possess the four virtues, namely, a woman's virtues, a woman's speech, a woman's skills and a woman's appearance. A wife should have a good moral character. If she has no morality, what might happen? Utter turmoil. If a woman with bad moral character marries into it, a peaceful family can be thrown into complete chaos. That's why a wife's virtues are very important. A Chinese saying goes, "A filial daughter-in-law outclasses a filial son." The ancients said, "A good wife can bring prosperity to three generations." If you marry a bad wife, what would happen to your family? Your family would fail for three generations. Therefore, what is the top requirement when choosing a wife? To choose one with virtues. However, do many men recognize this? Not many. We must teach our children, when seeking a partner, the most important criterion is virtue.

Women's Virtues

So, women must pay attention to practicing their virtues, because from seeing a mother's example, her children will naturally be instilled with these virtues. My mother often appraised my dad, "You are just too soft-hearted." Then she added, "You are all the same!" Originally she just appraised my father, but we were all appraised in the end. Then I would say, "Aren't you the same?" I remember as a child, my mother and I once took a taxi to my grandma's house. The driver was not very skillful; on a small road, we got stuck in a ditch. When the car was pulled out of the ditch, the exhaust pipe was caught and fell loose. We finished the rest of the journey hearing the noise of the pipe scraping. When we were dropped off, my mother paid the taxi fare, and added a NT\$500 tip.

At the time I was still a young child. When my mother took this money out, do you think she told me what she was doing? She did not. She probably did not even know that I was there watching. But in my head, a few thoughts popped up, "My mother recognized that he was a blue-collar worker and had to work hard. The cost of the repairs could cause serious strain on his family, while my family was more financially stable. So she wanted to help him with some extra money." I was very moved by what my mother did. So every word, every action that a mother does has an imperceptible impact on her children. I often tell this story during my lectures. One day I called my mother and talked to her about this incident. What was her reaction? She long ago forgot this incident and was not even aware that her children were constantly learning and touched. As we can see, a woman's virtues truly have an imperceptible impact on her children with her speech and actions.

Women's Speech

Next, let's talk about a woman's speech. When does a mother's speech start to influence her child? From the day she becomes pregnant. If a mother's speech is very gentle, the fetus will feel very comfortable. If she speaks loudly and harshly, the child will also learn to speak in the same way. When visiting friends' houses, I often observed some families talking loudly as if they were quarreling. This is one kind of habit. When we speak loudly and harshly, our children will learn the same bad habit. But if our speech is soft and forgiving, our children will obtain a good influence from us. I remember, neither of my parents ever spoke ill about any of their friends in front of my sisters and me. This is very important. If parents make negative comments about people, what are their children learning? Their children will learn to see others' shortcomings only, to criticize others and become arrogant. Therefore, we should be very careful with our speech in front of children.

Women's Skills

The third one is a woman's skills. In the past, women knew how to knit, weave, make clothes, and do a lot of housework. Do women nowadays still need to knit or make clothes?

There is no need because of the development of the textile industry. Surely the circumstances of a family in ancient times were different from those today. However, a mother still needs many skills in order to manage a family well, for example, tidying up a house. If a child grows up in an orderly and clean environment, he will imperceptibly develop a concept that items should be kept clean and organized. When he sees things scattered around, he will take the initiative to clean them up.

Besides cleaning the house, a wife should also be able to cook some delicious food. If a wife cannot prepare lovely meals, her husband and children will often eat out. What does this lead to? This means that they are less likely to be together as a family and it will undermine the harmony of the family. Moreover, restaurant food is often very greasy and salty. Today, what kind of illness is most common? Cardiovascular diseases. Patients with cardiovascular-related diseases are filling up the hospital beds. There are many people with stroke and myocardial infarction nowadays. If a wife always prepares healthy dishes, everyone in her family will be

very happy to eat at home. I remember when I was young, there was a very good slogan: Dad, come home to eat dinner, please! It created a very good atmosphere in a family.

Women's Appearance

Next, let's talk about a woman's appearance. We are not saying that a woman should dress up like a bride. A woman's appearance should be dignified and simple. She must not give up on her appearance after giving birth to children. Many women feel that they are destined to be like an old female servant after giving birth. When she does not care about her appearance, her husband might be shocked upon seeing her and run back out of the house. Surely, this is no good. A wife should dress up nicely so that her husband is delighted when he sees her.

Moreover, for whom does the wife's dignified appearance set a role model? For her children. We must have foresight. Hence, a woman's appearance is also very important.

When a husband and his wife can dignify their moral character, speech, and conducts, they are bound to succeed in educating their children. Nowadays, everybody speaks of equality between men and women. Therefore, not only women should follow the four virtues, men should follow them as well. A husband should be virtuous. He should also speak softly and often utter lotus-like-words (*kind and wise words), so as to set a good example for his children. A man should have many skills. If he is not capable, how can he keep his family together? If a father wears clothes improperly, he will have a negative impact on his children. A father putting his feet on the desk when sitting down is also part of his appearance! What do his children learn from this behavior? So we should always remind ourselves to be a good role model for our children. Leading by example is very important.

A Balance for Disciplining Children, Good Cop Vs. Bad Cop

Apart from the aspects mentioned above, we should also know how to be both kind and firm to our children. Speaking more directly, there should be a 'good cop' and a 'bad cop' in a family. The Chinese talk about the Doctrine of the Mean, neither too much nor too little. If a child only receives kindness from his parents, what will he become? He will not be afraid of his parents and will become impossible to control. On the other hand, if we are too stern, our children will start to push us away. Therefore, we should find a balance between being kind and firm.

When my younger nephew was born, my brother-in-law was very busy and my sister and nephew spent much time at my parents' house. I also took on the responsibility of educating this nephew of mine. Do you think I am more suitable to play the good cop or the bad cop?

(Audience reply: Bad cop!) Bad cop? How did you see through me right away?

I remember that in the first year I started teaching, there were some students breaking the school rules. I scolded them. When I returned from the second floor back to my first-floor office, all of my colleagues of the entire school looked at me and said, "Even you can be angry?" They were all shocked. Actually, we will not be able to teach children properly if we are not angry when it is needed. In this instance, being angry is to raise their awareness that they must not make the same mistake again. Life is like a play; whatever role we play, we should play it properly. To my nephew, I was the bad cop and his mother was the good cop. There should be a perfect collaboration between the two cops.

What Would Happen When Children Cross Their Parents' Bottom Line?

I remember a few years ago, it happened to be Chinese New Year's Eve, all of us gathered at my parents' house and were having dinner. My nephew was holding the tips of his chopsticks that are used for picking up food. I said to him, "Weiwei, you're getting germs onto the chopsticks when you hold them like this. You should hold the upper part of the chopsticks". He looked at me but kept moving his hand to the bottom of the chopsticks. I patiently said to him again, "You're getting germs onto the chopsticks. You should hold the upper part of the chopsticks". He looked at me and moved his hands again. Though he did not say anything, do you know what his implication was? He was thinking, "Let me see how far I can push you" Many children know how to test their parents' bottom line. When they have succeeded to pass your bottom line, they will make endless demands. Parents will experience constant failure if they keep giving in, and the children will use their emotions to threaten their parents. After three times of warning, it was futile. I instantly picked him up and took him to my room. Why did I take him to my room? Because I wanted to make sure all his supports were cut off, he would then know 'the fat is in the fire'. I picked him up. My mother said, "It is almost New Year, can't you spare him this time?" Should I discipline him? Surely, a child's mistake should not be excused just because it is New Year. If so, the child will never learn the rules.

In No Circumstances Should We Change Our Set Rules

Many parents nowadays sleep until noon on weekends. So their children only follow routines on the weekdays, and no routines at all on weekends. As a result, how do they look and feel when going back to school on Monday? Listless. Therefore, in no circumstances should we change our set rules. Otherwise, our children will only love ease and loathe labor. They will tend to indulge themselves in entertainment instead of following rules. I always tell my sister, even when she takes him to hike or on vacation, she should make sure that my nephew recites the classic texts every day. In doing so, the child will understand that he must complete his studying tasks whether he is at home or away from home. The clearer and firmer our principles are, the more our children will feel that it is their duty to do it. They will not use sweet-talk and hold the slightest hope of evading the tasks. We must firmly hold on to this principle.

How To End A Teaching Moment Properly?

When I took my nephew to my room, it was most important to make clear to him where he had done wrong. Is it that we like to punish children? Not at all! I told him, "It is useless to cry. The louder you cry, the harder uncle will spank you". When we say that to a child, he might cry even louder. So we gave him a spank. In fact, my nephew was still wearing diapers at that time. It would not be painful at all. It was actually the momentum of my authority that shocked him. I then told him that playing with emotions will never possibly achieve his purpose, and it was futile no matter how much he cried.

When you are very firm, he will understand that crying will not get him what he wants. Consequently, he will stop crying. Once he has stopped crying, you should then clearly tell him the reason. So I said to my nephew, "uncle teaching you in this manner is for your own good.

You should accept an elder's teaching". I changed my facial expression from being very stern to very amiable.

After the conversation, I came out of my room. Now, the bad cop had played his part. It was the good cop's turn. So my sister went into the room. As soon as she entered the door, my nephew ran towards his mother and tried to butter her up with a big hug. My sister pushed him away and asked, "What have you done wrong just now? Tell me!" The child did not say anything but tried to hug her again. My sister still insisted and asked, "What have you done wrong just now? You tell me!" She wanted her son to remember his own fault, not his uncle's punishment. After he admitted his fault, my sister told him, "Apologize to uncle" She taught my nephew to come to me and apologize.

This teaching moment was ended properly. Many parents only punish their children, venting their anger, but do not finish the whole process with a proper ending. As a result, many children keep only the memory of 'my parents have a bad temper'. Therefore, we must be both kind and firm at the same time. The good cop and the bad cop should collaborate carefully.

What Is the Most Serious Illness Among Women Nowadays? And Why?

Do parents nowadays like to play the bad cop? Do fathers nowadays want to play the bad cop? No, they don't! Why don't they want to be a bad cop? Because they are very busy and seldom spend time with their children. They feel guilty. Every time they come back home, they want to see smiles on their children's faces. So they bring many gifts and toys every time they come home. Not only do they never play the bad cop, they always play the good cop and spoil them. The child runs up to him and says, "You're so kind, dad", then quickly takes away the gift. After doing so for a few months, the child runs up to him and says, "Dad..." he does not look at the father but at the gift. He simply takes the gift away. One day, the father comes back home without bringing any gifts. The child says, "Dad, why do you come home empty-handed?" So, we must never rely on material to establish a parent-child relationship. We should use love and care to establish a parent-child relationship.

If a father does not play the bad cop, who has to take on the role? The mother. Females are by nature more loving and kind. They are meant to care for children. It is very natural for them to play the good cops. Now, women have to play both good and bad cops. After playing the role of a bad cop, many women feel very uncomfortable. Is it easy to switch to the role of a good cop immediately after playing a bad cop? Certainly not. After being stern to the child, she has to be kind to him soon after. Is it easy? What is the most serious illness among women nowadays? Endocrine disorders. Switching the roles between bad and good cops has caused immense burden physically and mentally for women. The Chinese ancestors observed that males tend to be masculine as the sun while females tend to be gentle as the moon. Therefore, a father is suitable for playing the bad cop. In doing so, children are much less likely to misbehave. I remember when I was young, my sisters and I would immediately behave ourselves as soon as our father gave us a glare.

I often suggest to those fathers who are very busy to spend some quality time with their children. The time does not need to be long. What is most important is the genuine thought of being with them. If you take 10 minutes every day to spend with your child, you must make sure that your cell phone is off and dedicate these 10 minutes to your child. You take out a book of

sage' teachings, such as *A Collection of Moral Stories*, and read two stories to him each day. If you continue doing so, your child will feel you truly care for him. After listening to the stories, he will tell his classmates, "My dad tells me two stories every day". His classmates will envy him. He will say, "Come, let me tell you these two stories". You have enabled him to practice sharing the sages' stories with others. So, the most important thing is that you have this intention. This intention will allow you to educate your children properly.

Practice What We Have Learned and Persevere With It

We have talked about how the husband-wife relationship is the most important among the five ethical relationships. Once the spousal relationship is harmonious, the five ethical relationships will all be harmonious. The sages taught us to 'focus on one subject and delve deeply into it'. This 'one subject' refers to the guidelines of morality. And *Dizigui* has precisely grasped the guidelines of morality. So we should start from delving into *Dizigui*. But how do we delve into it? To do so, our practice must correspond to our comprehension. We must put our comprehension into practice. Practicing what we have learned will give us a deeper understanding of the sages' teachings. The more understanding we have, the better comprehension we will get. And the deeper our comprehension is, the more solid our practice will be. So, understanding facilitates practice and vice versa. That's why we must put into practice as soon as we learn one line in *Dizigui*. Moreover, we should "persevere with it". This means we must constantly practice. I often tell many friends, "So long as you persevere and read *Dizigui* twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening, I guarantee that your virtues, knowledge, and wisdom will be greatly elevated after 3 months". Just three months! So far, those who have taken this advice found it quite effective. Would you like to try it?

When I was in Haikou, there was one teacher who truly did it. This teacher left a deep impression on me the first day she attended my class. It was on the Lantern Festival last year. She listened to my talks very attentively. Whenever I was telling the story of an ancient sage, she immediately wrote it down in her notebook. Three months later, she came up to me and said, "Teacher Tsai, such great teachings of the sages should benefit not only my family but others as well. I want to return to my hometown and teach *Dizigui*." Due to her aspiration, she persevered with it and maintained reading *Dizigui* twice a day. As a result, she made improvements especially fast. When reading *Dizigui* in the morning, it is to remind us to follow the teachings in *Dizigui*; when reading it in the evening, we reflect upon ourselves how well we have practiced the teachings today. We encourage ourselves by acknowledging the ones we have done well and warn ourselves by recognizing the mistakes that we have made, further making sure to never repeat the same mistakes. In doing so, we will receive very good results from 'persevering with it'.

Educate Ourselves Before Educating Our Children

We should always remind ourselves to rectify our thoughts, views, speech, and conducts. These rectifications must be exercised during interactions with others, not wait until when we have made a mistake. A friend once confided to me that he found the hardest among all the teachings in *Dizigui* is 'avoid exposing the shortcomings of others'. It was because, for the past

decades, he was used to talking about others' shortcomings. So he diligently read the teaching every morning and night. As a result, whenever he was about to expose someone's shortcomings later on, the line 'avoid exposing the shortcomings of others' would appear in his mind and he would shut his mouth immediately. This is called 'experiencing different circumstances to forge our mind'; we constantly rectify our thoughts, views, speech, and conducts through these circumstances.

So far, we have talked about the attitude to learning. First, we should set aspirations. Second, we should practice what we have learned. Third, we must set a solid foundation of virtues before reading other classical texts. Fourth, we should 'delve deeply into one subject and persevere with it'.

Once we have established the correct attitude towards learning, we will move on to formally learning *Dizigui*. Upon hearing the two characters 'Di Zi', which means pupils, most people will misinterpret it as something meant only for children to learn. In fact, this expression does not mean it is only for children; it is for people who learn sages' teachings because the ancient sages called their students 'Di Zi'. The character Gui is a compound ideogram. The radical on its left is 'man', and the one on the right is 'view'. When combined, it means the views of a great man. Such views certainly conform with sages' teachings. In other words, it is following the Truth of life to handle matters and interact with others. We must learn *Dizigui* properly before we can educate our children properly. As a Chinese saying goes, "Before teaching my son and daughters, I should teach myself first". So, in order to educate our children, we must improve ourselves first. Only by doing so can we set good role models for our children.

Ok. Let's turn to page 60. First, let us read the outline of the book together. Ready, set, go. "*Dizigui*, the guidelines for being a good person are exhorted by the ancient sages. Being filial and fraternal are the foremost rules, followed by being cautious and trustworthy; love all equally, but become close to the benevolent ones; Having practiced all of the above, I can then expand my horizons to study literary arts. Dear friends, if you read it so energetically at home, your children will be bound to admire and respect you. Your great learning attitude will touch your children. We will end this lecture here for now. Thank you very much for listening