

# Confucius Teachings On Building A Happy Life (16)

## - a foundation for Mahayana Buddhism practice

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### **The Three Treasure-Troves**

Hello my friends, good evening. I can see many familiar faces now because you have been coming here every night. It means that you have come here right after work and dinner, or even without dinner.

Confucius said that there are three treasure-troves for a person to acquire knowledge and truth. They are wisdom, benevolence, and courage. As the classics state,

*Being enthusiastic in learning is to draw close to wisdom.*

*To practice diligently is getting close to benevolence.*

*And to have a sense of shame is being near to courage.*

As long as one is keen to learn, one will not be far away from wisdom. When we practice the saints' and sages' teachings, we will gradually feel the sages' intention as well as other people's needs and thus bring about our heart of benevolence and empathy.

"To have a sense of shame is being near to courage" denotes a truly courageous person who can really recognize his own faults, further strive to rectify them and is able to subdue his afflictions and bad habits. This is a genuinely courageous person. Many of you have already been practicing the first phrase: being enthusiastic in learning is to draw close to wisdom. And I believe that your eager learning attitude will have a very good impact on your family in the future.

### **Keen Learning Pays Off**

I remember when my father was in his 50s, he was transferred to the stock exchange department of his bank. Since it was a requirement for the department to have a person on the staff with a license, my father and his colleagues were sent to take the examination. My father was the oldest, over fifty years old. I saw him reading books every night. As a result, only one person passed the examination. Surprisingly, all the young people failed, it was my father who passed the exam. You see, my father did not say a word, yet his action had won our admiration. Can we, as his children, not be keen in learning? Can we lose to our own father? So, the people below would emulate the people above. When we can persevere with this keen learning attitude, I believe it would surely be a very good start for our families.

This morning, we finished explaining the first chapter: Being Filial at Home. We will now move on to the second chapter: Practicing Fraternity Outside Home.

## **Practicing Fraternity Outside Home**

"Outside Home" implies beyond our family members, we must practice fraternity to all. It includes love and respect among siblings as well as the etiquette and attitude to respect elders. When siblings can treat each other with respect and courtesy at home, they would surely be able to extend such an attitude to people outside. Conversely, if siblings often quarrel and violate etiquette at home, would they suddenly become well-disciplined outside? Is it possible? Impossible! So, to truly know a person, where is the best place to see them clearly?

As the saying goes,

*Without going into a tiger's den, how can you catch its cubs?*

Go straight to their house! Much of our behavior of dealing with affairs and getting on with people is indeed developed at home. That is why family education is so important!

People often say, "a well-matched marriage of the same status." What status is matched? The most important criteria are family education and virtuous conduct. Well, what are the matching criteria people nowadays refer to? Wealth! (\*The audience replied)

How do you all know it? I am inexperienced in this!!!

If the matching criteria, the essence, are wrongly set, trouble will ensue. So, virtue is the foundation of a family, it is the base of a nation! It is definitely not wealth!

## **The Importance of Filial Piety and Fraternity**

There is a very important teaching in the *Classic of Filial Piety*, which reads,

*For teaching the people to be affectionate and loving,  
there is nothing better than filial piety;  
for teaching them how to be courteous and amenable,  
there is nothing better than fraternity.*

To teach the people to love and care for others, there is nothing more effective than to teach them filial piety. To teach the people to be just and know their boundaries as well as to be courteous and amenable, knowing how to respect others, nothing is better than teaching them fraternity. So, this "fraternity" also includes the teaching of etiquette.

Confucius also said, "If one does not learn etiquette, it will be hard for him to have a foothold in society." A person who is discourteous will very likely lose his standing in a group.

## **How to Help Children Plant the Seed of Encountering Benefactors**

As aforementioned in previous lessons, I had developed a habit since childhood: whenever there were elders in our house, as soon as I heard their voice and no matter what I was doing at that time, I would run to greet them, "Hello, uncle! Hello aunty!"

Your smile looks just like my uncle's smile! Ha ha ha...

A well-mannered child would surely make elders delighted. So, when I raised my head, I could see them beaming with joy; so was I because when a person is doing a

virtuous deed, joy will radiate from his inner heart. I suddenly realized whether a person will encounter benefactors in life or not has already been determined by his courteous attitude from youth. Do you believe it? When I held teacher-parent conferences, I told them, "Whether or not your child will encounter his benefactors in the future, I can already judge now." Upon hearing this, they would widen their eyes and be all ears because people today are very realistic; when you mention that their children can encounter benefactors, they would become very focused.

A well-mannered child would earn people's love and affection wherever he goes. On the contrary, not only will an ill-mannered child be unable to encounter helping hands from virtuous people, his speech and behavior would even bring him many obstacles. He would feel rather baffled when others do not like him. He would not be able to figure this out by himself. So, etiquette is too important!

### **Teach Children Etiquette While They Are Still Young**

My friends, since etiquette is so important, when should we teach it to our children? I would ask the parents, "Is scoring higher marks in the exams more important than teaching children the right attitude in dealing with affairs and interpersonal relationships?"

"The latter one is more important!"

Even though they thought so, where did they spend most of their time with children?

"On their test scores!"

So, we can no longer afford to procrastinate with such important matters. If we keep delaying, children will have grown-up. Once a habit is formed, it will become second nature. So, many things demand immediate action! I do not have children, but I am really worried for you all. We must pay attention to these important virtues that will affect children in their lifetime. In doing so, they will obtain much help from others in the future.

### **The Good Heroes of the Great Wall of China**

Let's think about it: what will happen if etiquette is absent in the interactions among people? For example, the last time I went to the Great Wall of China, I saw a sign which read, "Those who do not hike to the top of the Great Wall are not good heroes." It means if one wishes to be a good hero, he must hike the Great Wall. Some of the gates on the Great Wall only allow one person from each direction to walk through. As people were passing through the gate, many of them did not follow the rule and ran through the opposite path. What happened then? The whole crowd was jammed inside the gate.

Upon seeing this situation, our teachers knew this would not be good. it would not work. Since the people in both directions outside of the gate did not know the situation, they would continue to push forward, eventually something bad might happen. The teachers immediately stepped forward and started to direct the traffic, asking those who had tried to jump the queue to line up quickly. People looked at us and thought that we were from the Great Wall's management office.

Sometimes, when it is necessary for us to stand forth, we must do so. Otherwise, what would happen? The situation might become too bad to reverse, even if you had intended to do it. So, timing is very important! The traffic eased later. Indeed, without etiquette, people would selfishly seek personal interests and conflicts might happen.

## Good Etiquette Vibes Fill the Mountain Air

One time, on the way to Tianmu Mountain in Hangzhou, China, to give a 5-day lecture, we were driving up the mountain road and saw two cars heading towards us. We took the initiative to drive to the side to let the two cars go first. Since there were two cars, we waited for the first car to drive by—the people in the first car were very happy and waved to us, we also waved to them—when one is courteous, he will make others feel very comfortable as if one is bathing in the spring breeze. It's totally worth it, why not do it?!

And then, we waited for a while for the second car to pass by, but it didn't. We were wondering why and sent a person to check. It turned out that the second car had parked by the roadside, waiting for us to pass. We then drove past the car. The people in both cars were all beaming with elated smiles. When people are so courteous and respectful to each other, a pleasant vibe will fill the air.

Before we reached the mountain top, we had already experienced the local people's nature: simple and unadorned. We can always verify through our lives: only when we know how to practice courtesy and concession can we then make our lives smooth with no "traffic jams"—no conflicts.

So, "For teaching people how to be courteous and amenable, there is nothing better than fraternity." Let's begin to implement fraternal love and etiquette in our own family.

## Siblings Should Respect and Love Each Other

Next, let's read one paragraph of the text.

*The older children should be friendly  
and the younger ones should be respectful;  
when siblings get along harmoniously,  
filial piety already exists in their actions.  
When I do not value wealth much,  
where will resentment come from?  
When I hold back and do not speak hurtful words,  
the grudge will naturally die out.*

The older children should be friendly and the younger ones should be respectful. Siblings are connected branches that were born from the same energy and root.

As the saying goes, "Blood is thicker than water." Born of the same parents, siblings are most likely to accompany us the longest on our life's journey. Zen Master Fa Zhao once wrote a verse to describe brotherly love,

*Being born of the same energy and of connected branches,  
yet prospering separately,  
do not hurt each other's feelings by tiny bickering words.  
We get older every time we see each other,  
how much time is left for us to be siblings?*

*Only when forbearing each other can siblings live together in peace;  
never should we argue over trivial incidents.  
Now having children who become siblings with each other,  
we must leave a good example for them and our offspring.*

"Being born of the same energy and of connected branches, yet prospering separately..." Siblings are similar to the branches that extend from the same tree. "...do not hurt each other's feelings by little bickering words." The interflow among people and families is mostly through speech. So, our speech must be soft, it must be harmonious; we must never speak aggressively! That's why *Dizigui* teaches us, "When I hold back and do to speak hurtful words, the grudge will naturally die out." What is the reason that over half of the conflicts among people occur? Speech disagreement.

"We get older every time we see each other..." It is true that after we have reached 30s or 40s, we would share this same sentiment: our grey hair has grown a bit more every time we see our siblings. So, "...how much time is left for us to be siblings?" This indicates that the journey of our lives is approaching the end soon. We must cherish this siblinghood!

So, to live together in peace, siblings must practice forbearance and modesty. "...never should we argue over trivial incidents." We must not argue over petty matters.

"Now having children..." Our siblings now have their own children who become siblings with each other. As the older generation, we must set a good example of siblings' love and respect so that our descendants would have a precedent to emulate. This poem, written by Master Fa Zhao, is worth appreciating meticulously.

### **Teacher Yang's Filial Family**

This poem reminded me of Teacher Yang's words. She once told me that siblings are indeed born of the same energy and are connected branches. She would think of ways to make her father happy and delighted. She said, "Only when the children and grandchildren are sagacious, filial, and have very good development can she bring great comfort to her father."

Due to her filial intentions, hoping that her parents' big tree would flourish more and more healthy leaves and branches, when she was very young, she started teaching her nieces and nephews to study the saints' and sages' classics as well as writing calligraphy. She has eighteen nieces and nephews, and they were all taught by her.

Because of her filiality, the next generation of her family was very outstanding, many of them are teachers and a few are doctors. Indeed, for a family to have good fortune, what must the elders do? They must lead by example and contribute sincerely. So, fraternity is not only practiced in her generation but is also extended to the next generations.

Teacher Yang has no children, but during Mother's Day and Father's Day, her house would fill with merriment because she has eighteen nieces and nephews which should be a bit more than your children. I stayed in her house for half a year and it was very lively during these festivals. These nieces and nephews who were taught by her are indeed very filial to her.

### **Spend Time with Your Parents Before It's Too Late**

I have another sworn-brother who also lives in Taizhong, Taiwan. His siblings are also particularly loving and respectful to each other. Every Saturday and Sunday, as long as they are free, they would take the initiative to return to their parents' home without making arrangements beforehand. Because his father passed away in their early lives, for the rest of his mother's life, she was accompanied by her children.

His mother passed away a few years ago, and I went to attend the farewell ceremony. I was very touched when I saw that his younger generation, the nieces and nephews, all have very good personal qualities. Since his siblings are so loving, they have already set a very good example for the next generation.

I am used to investigating the cause when I see an effect.

Later, my sworn-brother told me that he felt an inner fulfillment when his mother left them. Why? Because in his past ten years of life, he tried his best to decline a lot of unnecessary entertainment to accompany his mother. When his mother passed away, he felt very comforted because he had made the right choice. So, when siblings are respectful and loving to each other, they would surely be able to set a good example for the younger generations to follow.

### **A Pure Mind Can Cure Another's Sickness**

The fraternal love and affection of people in ancient times has also moved many people to tears. During the Jin Dynasty, there was a little boy named Yu Gun. It happened that there was an epidemic in their village. Some of his siblings had already died, while another sibling was bedridden.

All his elders wanted to bring the other children away from that place immediately. But Yu Gun refused to leave. He said, "I cannot leave my brother here unattended."

His elders urged him again and again, saying that it was too dangerous to stay and they should all leave.

He said to his elders, "I was born unafraid of sickness. Please let me stay." Unable to change his mind, the elders left.

Such a little boy personally boiled medicine for his brother. Very often at midnight, he felt so sad and would cry bitterly in front of his departed siblings' altar. Owing to his fraternal love and care, his brother miraculously recovered.

My friends, how could his brother's disease be cured? Such affectionate love and care would surely boost his brother's immunity.

When dealing with a virus, Chinese people do not fight with it or go against it. Instead, they call it "detoxification," not "disinfection." When our mind is very pure, naturally the virus would be slowly transformed.

So, a loving and compassionate heart can help detoxify the virus. Later, when his elders and parents returned and saw the two brothers were still alive, they were very happy and comforted.

### **Morality Is More Important Than One's Own Life**

From Yu Gun's example, we can deduce that he must have studied the books of saints and sages despite his young age; in his value and perspective of life, there was one thing more important than life. What was it? The duty of morality. That's why a virtuous person will sacrifice his life to accomplish benevolence and uphold righteousness. Because in the heart of saints and sages, the duty of morality is more important than their own lives.

Due to their selfless intentions, there were very inspiring and touching stories written and passed down throughout thousands of years. Many of the stories also had a perfect development and ending. This is about Yu Gun's attitude towards his brother in the Jin Dynasty, whereby fraternal affection surpassed his own life.

### **The Hero Cherishes a Hero**

During the Tang Dynasty, there was a great minister named Li Ji. Actually, his original last name was not Li but Xu. Due to his great contribution to the country, Li Shi Min\* (\*Emperor Tai Zong) conferred on him the national surname of Li, hence he was named Li Ji.

We mentioned Emperor Tai Zong this morning. He truly honored the virtuous people and had done a very successful job. Once, Li Ji fell sick and the imperial doctor said that a man's beard was needed for inducing the medicine to function. When Emperor Tai Zong heard, he immediately took a knife to trim part of his beard and gave it to the doctor.

What happened when the news of this incident spread to Li Ji's ears? Being extremely moved, he immediately knelt before the emperor to express his deep gratitude towards the emperor's heart-to-heart trust and care.

This really illustrates "the hero cherishes a hero." Apart from being a loyal minister, Li Ji was definitely a filial child and a loving sibling because we know that a person's virtue is established on filiality and fraternity.

### **Do Kind Things for Siblings While You Still Can**

At that time, Li Ji was already very old. He had an older sister, who happened to fall sick. When he went to visit his sister, he saw her cooking porridge. He then asked the servant to leave and helped his sister to cook the porridge himself.

How did the ancient ministers look? They all had long beards.

When Li Ji was cooking the porridge, his beard suddenly caught fire due to a strong wind. He quickly put out the fire.

When his sister saw it, she said, "Ah, my dear brother, why are you asking trouble for yourself? There are so many servants at home, can't you just let them cook? Do not strain yourself!"

Li Ji replied, "Sister, you have grown so old, I don't know how many more opportunities I may serve you."

My dear friends, when Li Ji was cooking the porridge, his heart was full of immense gratitude. He always carried in his mind all the support and kindness that his sister had bestowed on him throughout his growing years.

### **Harmonious Siblings Is a Sign of Filial Piety**

I am also very fortunate to have two older sisters who took great care of me. My big sister happened to study in the same university as me. I remember my health was not too good at that time and I had to take Chinese medicine. A packet of the medicine was very big, it had to be boiled in a big pot for over an hour before it could be reduced to one small bowl.

I was a freshman and stayed in a dorm at that time. Was cooking medicine allowed in the dormitory? If I had done so, it would surely have harmed my interpersonal relationships. Everyone in the dorm would have protested in front of my room.

Since it was impossible for me to boil the medicine, my sister who stayed off-campus would help me boil the medicine twice a day, in the morning and at night. After the medicine was ready, she had to walk a long distance because the dorm was located at the edge of the school. Holding the bowl of boiled hot medicine, she arrived at my dorm where a sign said, "Female guests please stop here." She had to walk to the outside window of my room and knock on the window then she would use sign language to tell me "come for your medicine."

Upon seeing her kind gesture, my sickness had almost half healed. I quickly ran out to drink the bowl of Chinese medicine that was full of my sister's love. So, the affection between us siblings is very profound. This deep affection among us siblings has indeed let our parents rest assured.

As *Dizigui* states, "When siblings get along harmoniously, filial piety already exists in their actions." Because parents would think if the siblings are loving and caring for each other, they could then rest in peace after their passing.

### **One Way to Nurture Children's Gratefulness and Responsibility**

So, as long as the family is filled with such fraternal love and respect, I believe that the whole clan would surely have very good development. Besides, such tradition of filial piety and fraternity will not only move the people, even the animals in the family will also be touched. Do you believe it?

During the Song Dynasty, there was a scholar named Chen Fang. Thirteen generations of his family had been living under one roof, so there were over 700 people in the family. They abided strictly by their ancestor's will: do not divide up family property and live apart. Furthermore, they did not hire servants but did all the household chores by themselves. Is this way good? Good!

We have mentioned earlier that only by letting children do house chores can they know to be grateful. Doing chores is too important! Today, if children were to spend money lavishly, they would become extravagant. If they do not do any housework, what will happen to them? They will become lazy! They will become extravagant and lazy. Laziness will make them very dependent and not know how to be grateful. You see, many bad habits can develop from idleness. Insightful elders are able to see the impact of these matters on children in the future and will persevere with their standpoint.

Mr. Zeng Guo Fan\* was considered to hold the highest-ranking official position among the Han people in the Qing Dynasty (\*1811-1872, a Chinese statesman, military general, and Confucian scholar). He was the governor of four provinces.

Despite his high position, he had set a family rule: all children must be responsible for all the household chores. Was his decision important? Important! So, Mr. Zeng's descendants never decayed even after hundreds of years now.

In Taiwan, there is a descendant of Mr. Zeng who is also very successful. His name is Zeng Shi Qiang. He often goes to various places to give lectures. So, inheriting and passing down the family tradition is crucial.

### **How to Lose 30 Million Yuan Fast**

When one is very rich and powerful, but if he has no principles, his family's destiny is bound to decay within a few generations. When we study the posterity of Lin Ze Xu\*, Zeng Guo Fan, and Fan Zhong Yan, (\*1785-1850, known for his role in the events leading up to the first



Opium War, 1839-1842, between Britain and the Qing dynasty.) you will certainly find out that their family rules are indeed very far-sighted.

Family tradition and destiny that often failed in two or three generations were mostly those of businessmen. Because when one is rich, they would think what is the greatest? A saying goes, "If you have money, you can make the devil push the millstone for you." This saying is wrong. Because when one is rich, he would look down on the intellectuals. They would say, "It is no big deal that you have studied so much because you do not live a better life than me." So very often, by whom would such a bragging attitude be learned? The children will absorb it all.

There is a very good book entitled *Ways to Preserve Wealth*. It teaches us how to truly retain wealth generation after generation. Because, it is no big deal if only you can keep the wealth; even if you can retain your wealth can you bring it to your next life? You will leave the world empty-handed! There's nothing you can bring with you!

How to let your descendants have true fortune and wisdom, that is the genuine capability. Mr. Zeng Guo Fan's grandson, Mr. Nie Yun Tai, lived in Shanghai for a long time. My friends, Shanghai is a bustling city with many extremely wealthy businessmen. Having stayed there for decades, Mr. Nie had seen many tycoons who suddenly collapsed within one or two generations. He was then prompted to investigate the cause.

One of the businessmen's last name was Zhou. He ran the business of "cash loan store" and had branches everywhere. He was very wealthy and his wealth was counted in the millions of silver taels.

One of his branch supervisors helped him donate 500 taels to relieve a local flood where people were very poor.

Was donating 500 taels considered a lot when he had millions of taels?

Not much!

As a result, this supervisor was scolded badly by his boss, Mr. Zhou, "How dare you take my money to donate?" Mr. Zhou said, "There is only one way to keep my wealth: so long as it is in my pocket, I will never allow it to flow out, which is only one word: accumulation."

My friends, what are the consequences of wealth accumulation? It will ruin one's morality and disrupt a person's duty as a human. As the adage states,

*One's morality will be ruined once he accumulates wealth.*

Because,

*A wealthy and indifferent family will  
invite resentment among thousands of families.*

When you are so rich yet your neighbors are about to starve to death, but you are indifferent and not helping them, they would harbor resentment against you! What would happen when your house caught fire a few days later? Your neighbors would stand forth...

*Where people's hearts lie, the truth will be revealed.*

They would stand there and say, "Good, it is divine retribution!"

But if you could always make an effort to help them in every aspect such as in their daily life or even in their children's education, then they would always remember your virtuous kindness. If your house was suddenly on fire, they would surely rush to the scene to be the first person to pour the first bucket of water, right? Because when you contributed sincerely, the other party would surely be able to sense it. He would always think of repaying your kindness as long as there was an opportunity to do so. This is called,

*Those who love others will always be loved by others;  
those who respect others will always earn others' respect.*

We must carefully deliberate about the wisdom of the ancient saints and sages. Money is a shared-wealth; as the Chinese say,

*Just like water, wealth should be free-flowing.  
What would happen if water became stagnant?  
It would stink! If wealth is not flowing,  
there will be negative effects too.*

In the early years of the Republic of China, when Mr. Zhou, the businessman, was on the verge of death, his wealth converted to yuan amounted to 30 million. Was he rich? Very rich! As he had ten children and grandchildren, he divided his wealth equally so that each person received 3 million silver taels.

In the end, Mr. Nie Yun Tai observed that in just a few decades, these ten posterity had squandered all the money. Some of them had even started begging in the street. One or two of his offspring were more cultivated yet also squandered all the wealth. They were already more cultivated! But they still failed to retain their wealth!

### **A Fundamental Teaching from *The Book of Changes***

From this incident, we also realized that the teachings in the *Book of Changes*\* are truthful. (\*Also known as *I Ching*, an influential text read throughout the world, providing inspiration of religion, philosophy, literature, and art.) It states,

*Families that accumulate goodness  
will surely have abundant blessings;  
while families that accumulate unwholesome deeds  
will surely befall plentiful misfortunes.*

From here, we can also derive that some people are considered not bad, but why do misfortunes still keep befalling them? Perhaps his ancestors had not yet repaid the retributions completely. At this time, we must encourage him to persevere with his practice of virtuous deeds because that would surely enable him to turn the tide. When his misfortune is completely eliminated, good rewards will definitely manifest. Only by having such insight would one have good children and grandchildren. Both Zeng Guo Fan and Chen Fang knew well that they must let their offspring do chores, so they did not hire any servants.

## **Family Virtues Even Moved Their Dogs**

At each meal, there were 700 people gathering together to eat, the atmosphere was rather bustling. Chen Fang's family had raised about a hundred dogs and these dogs were not allowed to start eating until all of the dogs had arrived.

There is one saying which narrates this situation: when one dog has not arrived, the rest of the dogs would not start to eat. Such spirits of filiality and fraternity had moved the family dogs. If you were his neighbor, how would you feel when you saw such a scene?

Touched! (\*Audience reply.)

Other than feeling touched? We must not be worse than the dogs, still quarreling at home, right?

This spectacular case spread to the emperor's ears. The emperor was so moved that he immediately exempted this family's corvee labor\*. (\*Under the feudal system, compulsory, unpaid labor demanded by a king or emperor.) At that time, people were imposed on to serve the country with some construction work. The emperor felt this family had set a very good example, so he exempted them from this service.

You see, people's virtue can move the dogs. Some people said, "I don't believe it." People nowadays find it very difficult to believe such telepathy. Why? Because they use a petty mind to speculate, "I've never had any experience like that, how could they?" They do not think deeper about the sages' intention.

## **How a Filial Heart Moved a Ferocious Tiger**

During the Ming Dynasty, there was a scholar named Bao Shifu. He was a teacher in a private school. During the school break, he was going home to visit his parents. On the way home, he encountered a tiger that attacked him and dragged him to another place for its meal.

Bao Shifu did not panic because the ancient scholars knew that "Life and death as well as riches and nobility are predestined." He did not panic when facing death but knelt down sincerely and said to the tiger, "It is my fate to be eaten by you, but now I need to support my parents who are already in their 70s, could you let me fulfill my filial duties first? I will return to let you eat me later."

Such a filial heart had moved the fiercest tiger, so the tiger left! The locals then named this place "The Hill of Pleading with Tiger." It is to remember that Bao Shifu had pled with the tiger to let him return home to attend to his parents. Even the most ferocious tiger can be moved, let alone the most loyal and sincere dog! Not only can the animals and plants be moved, everything under heaven and on earth can be moved as well.

As the saying goes,

*All things can communicate and interact with sincerity and loyalty.*

With the utmost sincerity, heaven and the earth will all be moved.

## **A Filial Deed Moved an Earthquake**

During the Yuan Dynasty, there was a scholar named Li Zhong whose filial deeds had spread throughout the country. At that time, there was a huge earthquake in his village

and all the houses had been flattened. The houses in the epicenter were all flattened. When the fissure reached his house, it split into two and merged into one again after passing his house. This is a fact recorded in history, we have no reason not to believe it.

It is mentioned in the *Doctrine of the Mean*, "When misfortune and fortune are coming..." From where can we judge one person's misfortune or fortune is approaching?

*When misfortune and fortune are coming,  
they can certainly be foreseen  
based on one's good or bad deeds.*

If people practice goodness, what will they see coming? Misfortune or fortune? Fortune! If people practice evil deeds, misfortune will come. So, his filial deeds must have enabled him to escape the catastrophe. We must believe in this *truth* so that we would walk on a frank, open, and bright life-path. My friends, do you have confidence that you can turn calamities into blessings in life? Do you have confidence?

Yes! (\*Audience replies)

Good! Give yourself a round of applause.

### **The Importance of Impartiality**

"When siblings get along harmoniously, filial piety already exists in their actions." How do we interact with others harmoniously?

Let us think about it: take Chen Fang's family as an example. With 700 people staying under one roof, they were still able to get along harmoniously. How many members are there in modern families? There is already dissension in a family of three. Indeed, we have regressed a lot! Even before they have children, the couples have already started quarreling to the extent that some are unable to reconcile with each other. So you see, Chen Fang's family of 700 people were able to accommodate each other; that is indeed great skill and wisdom!

Getting along harmoniously is a result, what is the cause? The underlying cause is "equal treatment," only then can harmony be achieved. Equal treatment is the cause! When being treated impartially, how would people feel? They will also feel they are treated equally. Only when people feel that they are fairly treated can disputes be eliminated.

So, when educating our own children, we must grasp one principle: we must give equal care to every child. We must not treat the eldest son better than the youngest one. Throughout the thousands of years of Chinese history, there were many parents favoring a certain child. What did this result in? Internal strife among siblings. When people feel that they are unfairly treated, sooner or later a conflict will occur.

Let us think deeper: let's say we treat this child better now, would that be of any help to him? Is it true since you treat him better, he would certainly treat you well? Wrong! When you spoil him, he would become increasingly selfish, so you are harming him! The child who has been neglected by you would be psychologically imbalanced and would sometimes become very negative. You have harmed both of them; this is too irrational.

So, impartiality is all important. Even though I am the only son in my family, my parents treat all three of us equally. For example, when they rewarded us, we all received the same amount. If they had given me more, I would have become arrogant.

## **The First Family of the World**

During the Ming Dynasty, there was a scholar named Zheng Lian. His family, under one roof, consisted of seven generations. In our time, how many generations living together is the most we have heard of?

Three generations. (\*Audience reply)

Three generations is too few! I have heard of five generations living together when I was in China. For Zheng Lian, there were seven generations living together. Emperor Ming Tai Zu had great admiration for him and awarded him with a plaque called, "The First Family of the World."

How many people were there in his family? Over one thousand people. Other than awarding the plaque, the emperor also gave him two large pears. Emperor Ming Tai Zu was a very interesting figure, he wanted to see how Zheng Lian would share these two pears with a thousand people. He also sent the imperial secret guard to follow behind and see how Zheng Lian dealt with this affair. My dear friends, how would you deal with it?

Okay, let's think about it and we will discuss it in the next class. Thank you all for listening.