

Confucius Teaching on Building A Happy Life (32)

- a foundation for Mahayana Buddhism practice

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2/15-2/23 2005

Hello, my friends. “Exhorting others to do good deeds.” When we exhort others to do good deeds, and they are able to change, their family will also have a good transformation. When we have more friends like this, we will feel very pleased as we have fulfilled our moral responsibility as a friend. And we will also feel this life is very valuable. But, when we exhort people to do good, we must consider their acceptance. When teaching others to do good, do not set the bar too high; when we encourage others to do good deeds, if we set the standard too high in the beginning, the other party will feel it is too difficult to accomplish. Instead, we should make things easy for him, let him learn and practice with ease. We must not set the standard too high or else he will think, “Wow, that’s pretty far.” Do not say to him right away, “You must become a saint.” He will be scared to death. We should lead him to start from where he is now such as help his younger brother and mother, become a good older brother and filial son.

There is a big courtyard below our center. I once saw a lot of garbage there, so I went downstairs and started picking it up with a student. There are some children living downstairs, one of them, a little girl, stood there watching us picking up the rubbish. As teachers, if we were to say, “Child, quickly pick up this garbage.” She may not do it happily. I just kept picking up the garbage. When I got near her, I said to her, “Child, can you do teacher a favor? Can you pick that up?” She looked at me and picked it up, then picked up a second one... Since we had another student picking up the rubbish with us and everyone was working hard, this little girl happily joined us. When we ran out of garbage bags, she even rushed into her house and took out another bag to fill with rubbish. She did it joyfully with us — from the courtyard to the roadside. I was wondering when we should stop the work. I still had something else to do later. She had already dashed into the house to take out three garbage bags. When I saw her go to grab the fourth one, I said, “Let’s call it a day, teacher is very thankful to you.” As long as you can guide them skillfully, children will gain happiness and a sense of achievement when they lend a helping hand.

Of course, when others do good, we must praise and encourage them at the right time. When I returned to the center, it happened that a friend from Xinjiang had sent us some Xinjiang raisins. I said to the student who picked the garbage with me, “Bring these raisins downstairs to thank the little girl and share with her!” After that, this student brought the little girl to our center to play. This was a very good affinity that we had fostered. Later, she also came to our center to study. So, “exhorting others to do good deeds” helped create a good affinity. When we advise people, we can put ourselves in their position and slowly guide them to do good. This is “exhorting others to do good deeds.”

The fifth is “helping others achieve good.” Because in this age it is indeed not easy to accomplish good deeds. After nine months of hard work, I was invited to many places in China. What was it like during those nine months? Is there anything smooth sailing? Do you see the process of immense hardship behind my smile? At that time, I was alone without

anyone to turn to. It was then that I first experienced working from dawn till dusk everyday. I got up very early in the morning and rode a bike back late at night. At that time it was after ten o'clock, I would clean and wash my clothes when I got home. When I looked at my watch, it would be midnight. I slept like a log as soon as I lied down. So, if you have trouble sleeping, there is one solution: work till you drop.

This is an effective remedy. During that period, people often came to our center, looked around, and wondered. "How can there be such a thing now? The classes and books are free. There must be a catch." How are you so clear about this? They could not believe it. They had never encountered such a thing before. We often had such people questioning us, but we still welcomed them to come and check. We are only afraid that they do not come and check, once they do, they will be able to encounter and learn the sages' teachings. It is indeed not easy to accomplish good deeds in this era. So, when we see others engaging in meritorious deeds, we must go all out to help them. Even if it is one word of praise, I believe it is also a very important encouragement for them. So we must not be stingy with praise. This is "helping others achieve good."

Mr. Han Yu* also said, (*One of Eight Great Chinese Writers during the Tang/Song Dynasties.) "If you want to exhort people for a short time, use speech; if you want to exhort people for generations, use writing." Thus, we can write our life experiences and wisdom in books to benefit future generations. Just like Mr. Yuan who wrote the book, *Liaofan's Four Lessons*, which benefited not only his own descendants but also all those who read it. But, when we wish to exhort people with writing, we cannot randomly write a book. The Chinese speak of "Three Immortalities." Which three? They are "Establish Immortality in Meritorious Deeds, in Writing, and in Virtues." But their order must be correct. The right order should be like this: Establish Immortality in Virtues, in Meritorious Deeds, then in Writing. The order must be like this! If we write books before establishing our virtues, what we write may be nonsense, just idle theorizing. Virtues must be aided by continuous training to enable us to deal with people effectively and to further make contributions to society. This is engaging in "Establishing Meritorious Deeds." We then share with people how we self-cultivate and develop our career, which is "Establish Immortality in Writing." Therefore, we can see that in the Qing Dynasty, Mr. Zeng Guofan, a governor of four provinces, had indeed "Established Immortality in Virtues and in Meritorious Deeds." Naturally his essays benefited others immensely, so he had also completed "Establishing Immortality in Writing." These are all "helping others achieve good," and it is also "encouraging others to do good."

Next is "saving people in desperate need." When we see someone is seriously injured on the road, we must quickly dial 110 or 119 for the ambulance. This must be done! Because, if we are a second too slow, that person will be in danger. On the Mahavaipulya* website, (*A Sanskrit word meaning vast, boundless, and universal.) a friend left a comment saying, "I had intended to commit suicide, but after reading some articles on your website, I calmed down." Now there is one kind of illness that is very devastating to people's body and mind. What is this illness? Depression. It is very serious! I heard that teachers get the highest rate of depression, which I can understand. After all, they have to be responsible for the students' safety and many other aspects. They are under considerable pressure. Moreover, they are carrying the "teacher" title on their back, they will feel very uncomfortable if they do not understand a lot of principles. Indeed, we teachers must continue to improve and learn so that we can understand many truths and be at ease. Otherwise, we will easily become cynical and sullen. Therefore, if our words can make these depressed patients slowly open their minds and figure out the *truth*, this is also "saving people in desperate need."

I remember that I was about to drive back to Beijing after I had finished giving a five-day lecture in Qinghuangdao. Before our car drove off, a lady put her hands in through our front seat window. She said a bit emotionally, "Teacher Tsai, I had planned to commit suicide, but after listening to your five days lecture..." Actually, she was in tears as she spoke and so was I because I could really feel her sincerity. She said, "I have found the correct attitude towards life because of this five-day lecture. I will live my life well in the future." We can feel that the saints' and sages' wisdom is really of great urgency to people now. It is her sensibility and awakening that continuously pushes us forward so that we will not slack off.

Many friends and teachers said to me, "Teacher Tsai, it seems that you never get tired or feel like quitting!" They asked me, "How do you do it?" I said, "It is simple. If an eighty-year-old elder kneels before you, you will not back down." They did not understand, I then said, "On the third day when I was lecturing at Mount Tianmu in Hangzhou, I walked out of the dining hall after lunch. An eighty-year-old elder, I had no idea how long she had been waiting for us, knelt down on the spot upon seeing us." Luckily, I was on the badminton team in college, so how do you think my reflexes were? Do you see how fast that shuttlecock moves? You have to strike it instantly. So, my reflexes kicked in, and I suddenly knelt and slid over to support her. The seminar organizer next to me was afraid that maybe I had skinned my knees. Luckily there was carpet. Right away I said to her, "Madam, please stand up and talk. Don't do this."

As soon as she stood up, she said, "Teacher Tsai, you must promise me two things: first, you must go to Xinjiang where I came from, because the saints' and sages' teachings are not available there. You must go to Xinjiang to give such courses." She was already in her 80s and her children are teaching in college. May I ask who was this request made for? For future generations and the people of her homeland. Her act had taught all of our teachers who participated. Her selflessness is worthy of emulating. The teachers and staff members who were there were so deeply moved that they wept uncontrollably on the last day. They felt that the mission on their shoulders had become heavier. Even though there was a heavier weight, how did it feel carrying it? Not heavy! Because our arms had become stronger. We believe that all our ancestors as well as the ancient saints and sages in the unseen worlds will bless and support us. We also fervently believe that "Primordially, humans have an innate pure, good nature." Humans' true nature can surely be awakened. The elder then said, "The second thing is that you must give me a set of CDs of your lectures at Tianmu Mountain." An eighty-year-old elder is still so passionate about learning, it is really worthy for us to learn.

I said to these teachers, "This elder was so sincere and respectful to you, you must always bear it in mind and live up to her sincerity. When you can bear it in mind at all times, I believe you will neither be lazy nor regress." So, everything we do is our duty. All of the affirmation and respect given to us by everyone, we must imprint it in our mind. We must seriously establish our virtues and practice Dao to repay all those who loved, cared for, and extended warm wishes to us. This is called "saving people in desperate need." These six points are related to people, so I group them together. The seventh is related to matters: constructing public projects to benefit people. The eighth is "giving wealth to create blessings." The ninth is "supporting the proper Dharma." The final one is related to things: loving and cherishing all living things. These are the ten goodnesses all sorted out.

Let us look at the seventh point: constructing public to benefit people. In ancient times, we saw that many kind people build bridges and paved roads to benefit people. There are fewer such opportunities today. Who does this type of work nowadays? The government. In fact,

there are still ample opportunities for us to contribute. For instance, when we see a pothole on the road that is already very serious, we can take the initiative to call the government to deal with it. When the hole is big, you must think, “What will the consequences be?” Right, if someone, who is drunk and out of it, drives fast, he may fly out of the motorcycle when he hits the pothole. With this consideration, we can imagine that others may suffer; such kindness is rather precious. So today, when you are walking, driving, or cycling on the road, what should you do when you happen to see a big rock in the middle of the road? You should quickly remove it. Your action may save a family. You never know! It is extremely important to have such kind-heartedness and consideration for others at all times.

So, the genuine meaning of “constructing public projects to benefit people” is to do good deeds that can bring benefit to the public with our best ability in accordance with conditions. But, if you see a rock on the highway, should you stop your car to remove it? You should quickly call the relevant authority. It is too dangerous to stop the car to remove it. We must be flexible and see how to properly handle it. In Haikou, I often saw a lot of huge rocks on the road. That is because many migrant workers who were waiting there for work would move big rocks to the road and sit in a circle to chat. We can see the rocks during the day but not at night. Very possibly, for instance, someone is on his mobile phone, walking, what will happen if he suddenly runs into the rock? He may trip and fall. So, when we see the rocks, we must quickly remove them. Sometimes when we pass by a construction site, a bamboo pole may stick out. (*In China scaffolding is often made from bamboo poles.) This is very dangerous because our head may be accidentally hit. If we happen to see this, we can look for a red cloth nearby to tie around it. When we do good deeds according to circumstances every day, I believe we will be delighted as well because “Helping others is the root of happiness.” This is about “constructing public projects to benefit people”

Next is “giving wealth to create blessings.” We have discussed “wealth” before. We can give money or material belongings. We can also use our labor and experiences to help others. Many volunteers now contribute with their physical labor. As a matter of fact, is giving internal or external wealth more difficult? Inner wealth. (Audience’s reply.) Yes, a lot of people may easily donate one to two hundred dollars, but it may be difficult for him to spend three hours to serve others. So, good deeds can be difficult or easy. If one can do good despite its difficulty, the merits will be even greater. This is “giving wealth to create blessings.”

Lastly is “supporting the proper Dharma (sages’ teachings).” Dear friends, you are supporting proper Dharma right now. Because your kind expressions have inspired me greatly! Otherwise, I would have messed up my lecture since my heart is easily hurt. Some friends think that our lectures are quite helpful, so they brought their friends here. These all belong to “supporting the proper Dharma.” There are also mothers who brought their sons. Doing so, I believe her husband will be very happy. Why? Because after the son has listened to the proper Dharma and benefited from it, how many generations of his family will prosper? Many generations! This is “supporting the proper Dharma.” When there are many youths who aspired to give Dharma lectures, we should encourage and support them, so they will keep on improving their skills. Then your merits will be infinite.

The last one is “loving and cherishing all living things.” We must also cherish things and objects. We should be aware that “every meal is not easily obtained.” We must not waste it. Similarly, we must also cherish life. In Australia, construction workers often encounter some big trees when building roads. They will always first see if there are any bird nests in the trees. If there are, they will stop the project. They will wait until the season has passed and

the birds have flown away before they start work again. Can we do that? The Australians are very honest and pure. While we were there, we saw that people always greeted each other whenever they met. It shows that they are very kind-hearted. When people are kind-hearted, the entire environment will be peaceful and favorable. That is why the vegetables grown in Australia are particularly big. We were always very full after every meal. Indeed, when we respect life and all things, they will reward us abundantly.

A poet from the Tang Dynasty, Bai Juyi, has a poem which exhorts us to cherish animals and life. The poem states, "Do not say animals' life is insignificant..." This means that we should not regard animals' life as worthless. "Do not say animal's life is insignificant, they have bone, flesh, and skin just like you and me; please do not shoot the birds in the trees, the baby birds are in the nest waiting for their mother to return." We should use this kind of empathy to love and protect animals. Nowadays, some businessmen specifically trap wild birds for children to buy. Should we buy them? It is better not to. The more you buy, the more they will catch. When we have the consensus not to buy from them, they will stop catching the birds if they feel that they cannot make any money. Moreover, can we keep these wild birds alive? It is difficult. So, we should educate children since young not to buy wild birds so that they will catch less. In this way, these animals will not be separated from their parents. This is also a way of instilling children's compassion from young. These are the ten good deeds.

Now that we know how to judge goodness and what to practice, we must remember, "Upon seeing the good points of others, I should strive to be as good as them. Even when far behind them, I am getting closer gradually." While doing good deeds, we must remember this phrase, "When encountering benevolent deeds, do not be outdone by the teacher." Do not fall behind others in doing good. A phrase reads, "Not being outdone by the ancients is called having ambition." It means that we should regard the ancients as our role models but we must not be outdone by them. We may even surpass them. This is not being arrogant. Let us think about it, as a parent today, if your son tells you, "Dad, it is impossible for me to surpass you in this life." Will you be happy? You will say, "I have told you so many of my experiences. I didn't know anything when I was your age, but now I have shared so many of my experiences with you, how can you still say that you can't beat me?" How will the father feel? Very sad. If everyone of us who learns the saints' and sages' wisdom says, "They are saints and sages, we certainly can't do it." What will our ancestors think? They will sigh, "This child cannot be taught!" Therefore, we must have such aspiration when we learn wisdom: "Do not be outdone by the ancients." Just like us teachers watching these outstanding students grow up day by day, we all hope that their future achievements will surpass ours. This will make us very happy.

My friends, you have encountered the excellent teacher (referring to Master Chin Kung), so you know to cherish the wisdom of the saints and sages. We must establish our virtues and practice Dao, striving to surpass our teachers. Only then will our teacher feel very comforted. "Setting a firm aspiration is the cornerstone of learning." Do not let your goal fall to the bottom at the very beginning. "Upon seeing the good points of others, I should strive to be as good as them. Even when far behind them, I am getting closer gradually." Indeed, all of the teachers' instructions to us may be their decades of invaluable experiences. It is indeed so. This is my deep feeling. Hence, as long as we hold onto being obedient and honest, "even when far behind them, I am getting closer gradually."

"Upon seeing other's wrongs, I must introspect myself right away. If I have the same faults, I will correct them; if not, I will be vigilant."

When we see faults in others, let us not criticize first but look at whether we have made the same mistakes. If we have, quickly rectify them. If we have not, that is very good, keep it up! Teacher Li Bingnan (one of Master Chin Kung's teacher) has a very good teaching. He said, "When we see the goodness in others, don't be jealous but rejoice in their meritorious deeds. When we see faults in others, don't criticize but advise them or keep silent. When we see people do something wrong, instead of blaming, help them correct it." Many of this elder's words encompass the great wisdom of life. If we can often use them to examine our mind, then we will make rapid progress. So, when we see others do good, we must encourage them instead of being jealous. When we see people have wrongdoings, do not criticize because it will only make the group lose the harmonious atmosphere. We should exhort them or keep silent. Why should we remain silent? Because, when the conditions are not right and they do not yet trust us sufficiently, as soon as we exhort them, perhaps they will think that we are giving them trouble or slandering them. This is not good! As we mentioned earlier, which foundation should we establish prior to exhorting others? Yes! Trust. Thus, it is stated in *The Analects*, "Only after earning a person's trust will a virtuous man exhort him. If trust is not established yet, he will think you are slandering him." You may cause misunderstandings with him, which is bad.

What will a typical person's first reaction be when he sees others do something wrong? "What are you doing?" When your child accidentally breaks a plate, you will snap at him right away, just like a machine gun: bang bang bang. How will the child feel? He will feel even more guilty. At this time, if you can remain calm, he will realize that his parents are well-cultivated. When we clean up the mess with him, he will be very grateful. Furthermore you then guide him, "Why did this mistake happen today? Let us analyze it." In this way, when a mistake was made, we can help him improve his abilities to tackle things and even help him improve his character. When we harbor this kind of intention, our interpersonal relationships will be in great harmony. When "seeing other's wrongs" do not take it to heart. It is very foolish of us to pollute our pure mind with a lot of others' rubbish. A friend once said, "It's very hard not to see people's fault." He went to seek Professor Chin Kung's advice and the Master gave him a good method, which I think is remarkable too. He said, "In the future, when you see others' faults, you can simply say, 'It is all my fault.'" Why is that so? Let's say when you see your son misbehaving, you should say, "It's all my fault! I didn't educate you well." Then quickly teach him. Or when you see your wife doing something improper, you should say, "It's all my fault! I couldn't move her with my virtues. It's my problem as well." If you see someone on the street lacking public morality, you should say, "It's all my fault because I didn't set a good example to influence him." When people are always aware of their own duties, they will not waste time chattering about the faults of others. I think this method is pretty ingenious and beneficial.

So, "Upon seeing others' wrongs, I must introspect myself right away. If I have the same faults, I will correct them; if not, I will be vigilant." Correcting one's mistakes is also a very important knowledge. *Liaofan's Four Lessons* also mentions, "Before talking about practicing virtues, one should first rectify his own faults." If we do good without correcting our wrongdoings, it is like we are adding water (a metaphor for good deeds) into a bucket with several holes (a metaphor for wrongdoings). Since we have faults not rectified yet, these faults are symbolized by the holes of the bucket, what will happen to most of the water as we add it into the bucket? It leaks out. We must patch the holes first so that we can accumulate more and more virtues in the future.

But to mend our faults, we must first give rise to three kinds of minds. First, we must give rise to “a sense of shame.” Second, we must give rise to “a sense of fear.” Third, we must give rise to “a courageous heart.” Why must we have a sense of shame? Because everyone has great potential and can become a saint or a sage through self-cultivation. That is why Mencius gave us this encouragement: “What kind of man was Shun*? What kind of man am I?” (*A legendary emperor of ancient China, praised by Confucius as a model of resplendent virtue.) He who exerts himself will also become such as Shun was.” We have such a rare chance to obtain a human body... Is it easy to be born as a human? Not easy at all! Since it is not, we should conduct ourselves well and live up to the expectations of our ancestors by behaving in accordance with the virtues of heaven, earth, and humankind. How do we do it? That is to demonstrate the virtues of heaven and earth. What virtues does the earth possess? It nurtures all things. It does not differentiate the objects but helps all succeed. It has an exceptionally broad and impartial mind. You see, we give the filthiest things to earth, but it transforms them into nutrition for us in return. It is just like a mother: even though we may urinate and defecate and our mother has to clean it up, what she gives in return is selfless dedication. So, “the earth is like mothers, and heaven is like fathers.” We should seriously demonstrate the virtues of heaven and earth through our deeds in this life.

My friends, how many more times are animals than humans in number? Just a single kind of ant in a primeval forest alone has a larger population than the total number of humans. Do you believe it? You see, how many ants are there in such a big ant nest? Let alone the entire virgin forest. As it is extremely rare for us to be born as a human being, we must not fail and waste this life. Since the ancients could become saints and sages, we must not let our life slip by without making contributions or even create a burden on our family and society. That will be too shameful! So, Mencius said, “Shame is of great importance to a person.” Having a sense of shame is too important! If we have it, we can become saints and sages. Without it, we may be reduced to worse than beasts. Therefore, a sense of shame plays a vitally important role in determining whether a person can cultivate virtues and succeed in his spiritual endeavors. This is what is meant by “a sense of shame.”

Secondly, we must give rise to “the sense of fear.” It is said, “There are deities three feet above our heads.” “Do not do what you do not want people to know.” We often feel that we can hide things well, but we are actually deceiving ourselves and others. “Time will eventually reveal a person’s heart.” When people see through you, they will find you are worthless. It is never too late as long as you are willing to change. In ancient times, some people, who had committed evils all their life but suddenly repented their sins on the verge of death, were able to have a good rebirth. So, even if the offense is immeasurable, it will be resolved by one’s repentance. Thus, knowing how to repent and rectify one’s faults is crucial. “What happened in the past has gone like yesterday, let us live well and cherish today.” From now on, if we make up our mind to become a good student of saints and sages, I believe we can make up for any wrongdoings committed in the past and can earn others’ respect. This is the need to “give rise to the sense of fear.”

To be honest, life is impermanent. We have no idea how long this physical body can be retained, so we must not wait any longer to rectify our faults. Once our life is over, we can not reform anymore even if we want to. Your notoriety of a lifetime may even bring shame to your descendants. Are there such people? Yes! We went to Yue Fei* Temple in Hangzhou (*A loyal general in Southern Song Dynasty who was framed by Qin Kuai and put to death by the Emperor.) and saw two statues of a husband and wife. Who? Qin Kuai. (Audience replies.) You see, how long had they been kneeling there and spurned by people? Nearly a thousand years. Moreover, have you

heard anyone say, “I’m a descendant of Qin Kuai”? Have you? Did he have any descendants? They dare not admit it. He had brought terrible shame to his descendants. We must not do such heinous acts. That is why we must give rise to a sense of fear.

Next, we must have a courageous heart. We must be very courageous in subduing our bad habits. I remember the first time Uncle Lu had a conversation with me for over two hours. One thing he said left the deepest impression on me. He said, “Be utterly ruthless with yourself.” It is very well said! “But be kind to others.” In fact, it has the same meaning as what saints and sages often teach us, “Be stern with ourselves but be generous with others.” But the words used by Uncle Lu enable us to remember it for life. In the future when our bad habits rear their ugly head, what should we do? Please do not take a knife; I will not be responsible. Uncle Lu actually meant that we cannot back off when it comes to curbing our bad habits.

This sentence made me think of a historical story. In the Three Kingdoms Period, when Zhao Zilong rescued Adou, he strapped Adou to his chest despite being surrounded by hundreds of thousands of legions. May I ask, what was his only thought at that time? To get out of there, to protect Adou, the last emperor of Shu-Han. Now that we aspire to improve our knowledge and wisdom, we must have Zhao Zilong’s verve. Do we have many afflictions and bad habits accumulating from the past? They are just like these hundreds of thousands of troops coming in full force. At this time, we cannot afford to have any thoughts of retreating. Because as soon as we hesitate, we will take dozens of steps backwards even though we have taken five steps forward. We will then be very frustrated! So, do not have the thought of withdrawing, I believe you can certainly save Adou (referring to overcoming our afflictions and recovering our intrinsic nature). My friends, who is Adou? Who is Adou? I asked this question in one of my lectures, and the audience said, “Liu Bei’s son.” This is an analogy. We must protect our intrinsically pure, good nature well, so it can really be put to good use. This is about “to have courage and never retreat.”

It is also mentioned in *Liaofan’s Four Lessons* that we must repress bad habits as if our finger has been bitten by a poisonous snake. At that time will you still hesitate? Will you say, “Should I cut off my finger?” While you are thinking this and that, you will run out of time and find that you have faced the death. You should quickly take out your sword and cut off the infected part. This is “putting an end to bad habits.” Do not let them stay for even half a second. What should you do immediately as soon as bad thoughts arise? Transform them. What should you use to transform them? I am sure you all know it in your heart. We can use the classic texts to remind ourselves and to transform our thoughts. For instance, when you are about to get angry, you can immediately recall these phrases: “When getting angry, think of the difficult consequences you will encounter.” and “When I hold back hurtful comments, anger will naturally dissipate.” Do you all know what method I use? Good, if you know it.

We mentioned, “Upon seeing others’ wrongs, I must introspect myself right away. If I have the same faults, I will correct them; if not, I will be vigilant.” We must have both the courage and the method to rectify our faults. There are three main ways to rectify our faults. We can rectify from actions, rectify from reasoning, or rectify from mind. To rectify from mind is like removing a poisonous tree, it is to pull out its roots. Just like cutting off the tree root, we must rectify it from the base. So, a person who truly knows how to self-cultivate will constantly observe his own thoughts. When one can be aware that his thoughts have strayed, and he can quickly correct them, it is impossible for him to have improper speech and behavior. This is knowing how to reform. Let us look at the following verse and recite it together once.

“In virtue and learning, in ability and skill, if I am not as good as others, I will encourage myself to be better. As for clothing and attire, or food and drink, if I am not as good as others, I will not feel inferior.” “In virtue and learning, in ability and skill, if I am not as good as others, I will encourage myself to be better.” As parents, if you can attach the most importance to virtue, you can surely establish a proper value and perspective of life for your children. “As for clothing and attire, or food and drink; if I am not as good as others, I will not feel inferior.” So, do not treat your life as just a constant pursuit of material pleasure. As parents, if you were to give priority to money, what would your children be taught to place the most importance on? Money! When personal gains are valued most, what will be neglected? Righteousness. At that time, whose money will be robbed? Parents. (Audience replied.) Right! “Man’s plans are inferior to Heaven’s”

Let us think about it: will life be really satisfying after you have obtained all the material pleasures such as food, clothing, and even accommodation? If a person who pursues materialism, and all his life is truly happy, then I reserve my opinion. I will also help and encourage him. but in reality, that is not the case; people who endeavor on pursuing material objects actually feel very hollow inside. They often compare themselves with others; when they see others buying a new car, they will feel terribly uncomfortable. This is called “seeking afflictions and asking troubles for oneself.” So, I would say to them, “How long will you be happy when you buy a very expensive dress?” One minute? It is not that bad! Happy for three days. Perhaps after she has swiped the card, half of her month’s salary will be gone. She is happy for three days, but for how long will she feel the pain? A month! After buying the dress, she will wear it to the office the next day and say to her colleagues, “Do I seem different today?” If she encounters colleagues who are a bit dense, they will ask, “Is there any difference? I can’t tell...” She will then be enraged, “I spent so much money and you don’t even notice.” She will no longer be happy but in pain. The pain comes from others not noticing. She constantly worries about gain and loss. Such kind of happiness is called “the suffering of decay.” The happiness is short-lived then she experiences the feeling of suffering. So, the happiness people pursue is illusory and unreal.

What kind of happiness can make a person feel indescribable joy and fulfillment where the joy springs out from the inner heart? What kind of happiness? Doing good is the happiest thing. It is mentioned in The Analects, “Isn’t it joyful to learn with constant perseverance and practice?” The happiness from personal and spiritual growth will bring us inexhaustible joy in life. We will stop here today. Thank you everyone.