

## ***Dizigui 40 English***

### ***Monarch, Parent, and Teacher***

Hello, my friends. We had mentioned that “If I can be close to benevolent people, I will benefit immensely.” This “be close to” implies “learn from benevolent ones at all times.” The most important thing is to imprint the saints’ and sages’ teachings in our mind without slacking off. As long as we constantly examine whether we have been others’ “monarch, parent, and teacher,” I believe that our virtues will grow daily and our wrongs will lessen day by day.

I am sure that people will definitely develop towards an increasingly perfect state. We also mentioned that, as long as employers, parents, and teachers can comply with this method to cultivate themselves, they can educate their employees, children, and students successfully without a doubt. Likewise, can colleagues be each other’s “monarchs, parents, and teachers”? Can they? Yes, they can. If we can abide by the company code of conduct and set a good example for others, we are acting as others’ “monarch.” Furthermore, colleagues must take care of each other. For example, when we have something delicious, we can generously share with them, making them feel like family, then you are also acting as their “parent.” When they do not understand something and you have a wealth of experience, you also generously guide them, you are acting as their “teacher.” So, to achieve a perfect relationship among colleagues, we can also observe through whether we have acted as others’ “monarch, parent, and teacher.” I believe you can definitely become a very important and influential good friend in their hearts.

Can we be a “monarch, parent, and teacher” to our parents? Can we? Yes, we can. It is stated in the chapter of “Records on Learning” in *The Book of Rites*, “The Great Dao cannot be confined.” The genuine Great Dao of the universe is absolutely applicable to all. When people get old, if they have never learned the sage teachings, they may sometimes become very greedy. So, Confucius warned us that “having reached old age, one should be on his guard against avarice,” because old people are losing their abilities, they often worry about gains and losses. At this time, parents really need their children to guide and advise them to let go of attachments. Only by persuading them to let go of attachments would they beget great joy physically and mentally. To judge if one has a blessed life in his old age, it does not depend on his material condition but his spiritual state. When we aspire to become a “good spiritual teacher” for our parents, we must first be their “monarch,” leading by example. Otherwise, your parents would say, “You behave like that, how can you criticize me?” Moreover, we must spare no effort to practice filial piety so that our parents will trust us more and more. When your parents trust you so much, whose words will they listen to? Of course listen to yours. You can then give them timely guidance and advice. This is acting as their “teacher.” By using “being others’ monarch, parent, and teacher” to constantly observe our speech, deeds, and thoughts, we then truly become close to saints and sages, becoming close to benevolent people all of the time. We will then reap the great benefits of “My virtues will grow daily and my wrongs will lessen day by day.”

### ***The Genie On the Island***

Next: “Not becoming close to benevolent ones is infinitely harmful, petty minded people will come, and everything will turn bad.” When we do not learn from the benevolent ones and get close to petty minded people, we may be influenced by them. As the saying goes, “One

who stays near vermilion gets stained red, and one who stays near ink gets stained black.” So, it is vital for people to choose their environment. My friends, can your child choose to get close to virtuous teachers and friends? Can they? We once gave a lecture to the junior high school students. We mentioned that there were three friends who went traveling on the sea together. There happened to be a big storm which caused their ship to sink. Fortunately, they survived due to their ancestors’ hidden merits. They drifted to a deserted island where they depended on each other for survival. Suddenly, they found a magic lamp on the beach. My friends, what should they do with this lamp? Fortunately, they have read *Aladdin’s Lamp*, so they rubbed it. As soon as they did, a genie appeared and said, “Masters, I’ll give you three wishes. But, there are three of you, three divided by three equals one, so each of you can make one wish.” The first friend was a taxi driver, so he said, “I have to drive day and night and feel exhausted, I wish I could have several taxis to rent to other people, so I can be a boss.” The genie said, “It’s a piece of cake!” With magic power, the genie sent him home and he became a boss. The second one was a supermarket employee. Sometimes, he had to work at midnight since there were three shifts. He also felt that his job was very laborious. He said, “I wish to have my own convenience store, so I can be the boss and hire people to work for me.” The genie said, “It’s a piece of cake!” The genie also sent him home and he became a boss. The third one thought for quite a while. He had no ambition in his life, he was used to muddling along never thinking of what he wanted to do. He did not have any dream, just being idle all day long. Suddenly he thought, “I don’t have any wish. But this deserted island is not bad, only it is too lonely with just me alone. I hope the two of them will come back to accompany me.” Did you hear two loudly and sadly weeping?

Many of the students burst out in laughter after listening to the story. I then asked, “Do you have such friends who will drag you down?” All of a sudden, they looked to their right and left... I asked, “Do you have the ability to judge?” They were made speechless by my question and did not know how to respond. I said, “What should you study so that you have the ability to judge whether a friend is good or bad?” Correct! *Dizigui*. *Dizigui* is a “demon revealing mirror” and is also a “sage reflecting mirror.” You can determine good and bad friends at a glance. When *Dizigui* is used for rating, you will find that it is actually great already if you implement just thirty to forty percent of it.

### ***Let Go of the Garbage***

In *Zhu Bolu’s Maxims for Managing the Family*, it states, “If you associate with immoral juvenile friends, you will gradually be affected.” When our virtues are not firmly established, we must respectfully stay away from those unvirtuous ones. Can we scold them? We cannot! “Publicizing others’ wrongs is in itself evil, they will resent more and be driven to act even worse.” So, it is better to respectfully keep our distance from them. We should earnestly cultivate our virtues first. It is easy to guard against the villains outside, but how about the ones inside of us? It is very difficult for us to guard against them. We must not regard a thief as our father anymore. We must be determined not to do such a thing anymore. What thieves do we regard as our fathers? The thief of afflictions! It refers to our bewilderment and bad karmic habits. Are they powerful? They arose even though you really did not want to get angry and be greedy.

I told many friends that it is like we are carrying a bag of garbage, the stink is obviously overpowering, but we got used to carrying it for decades. Suddenly someone said, “That bag is rubbish, it won’t do you any good.” “Really?” You turn around, look at it, and finally recognize it is indeed garbage. You then think, “I have carried it for decades, I am reluctant to let it go.” You keep struggling! The sage taught us, “The vital thing in cultivation is to observe

one's mind." So, we must constantly observe our minds to see if we are disrespectful, greedy, lazy, or lacking in compassion. Once we see these thieves, what should we do immediately? Rectify evil thoughts and never let them continue to run rampant. In this way, the villains can then be completely driven out. Let us look at the seventh chapter: Study Literature and Arts after Having Practiced All the Above. Let us recite the classic text once, "If I do not actively practice virtues but only study, all I attain is superficial vanity, what kind of person will I become? If I only practice diligently but do not study, I will only do things based on my own opinion and deviate from the truth."

This sentence has already pointed out to us that for one to grow his wisdom, he must proactively practice and study. This is called "Cultivation corresponds to comprehension." This is too important! Practice and study are like two wheels on a bike. With only one wheel, a bike will not move. There must be two wheels coordinated harmoniously together. What will happen if only one spins while the other has broken down? This classic text tells us if we do not actively practice but study, even obtaining a very high degree, how will we end up? "All I attain is superficial vanity." Look at the six, seven years old children, when I went to teach them, I said, "Today I am going to teach you *Dizigui*." They said immediately, "We have learned it and memorized it by heart." They held their heads high. Look! Does arrogance need to be taught? Arrogance arises by itself! So, we must be vigilant. We must let children know in the first place that knowledge must be implemented, otherwise all they attain is superficial vanity.

### ***Divorce Your Wife?***

I once saw a report that states, "A capable student in a specialized profession with a retarded living ability." Despite one's high degree and great knowledge, why does he lack the ability of self-conduct? What was his intention of studying? To excel in the exams. What he acquired was disconnected from his life. Which level degree holder has the highest divorce rate? Perhaps the master's and doctorate degrees contribute to the highest divorce rate. Why is it that people who have studied a lot cannot accommodate, forgive, and care for others? Where is the problem? What have books given them? Superficial vanity. He thinks, "I have such a high degree, you've got to listen to me." Especially people with a Ph.D. in Computer Science, they work with the computer all day long. The computer is easy to manage and will do things for him at the press of a keystroke. Can this method be applied to humans? He will absolutely end up with being forsaken by his family and people. So, "Studying Literature and Arts After Having Practiced all the Above," we must practice whatever we have learned, or else "all I attain is superficial vanity, what kind of man will I become?"

But, "If I only practice diligently..." Let's say, I practice very seriously, implementing one sentence after learning that sentence, yet stop studying and rectify my faults during this process, I may end up as "only doing things based on my own opinion and deviate from the truth." For instance, one is learning "filial piety." He thinks, "I must be filial and obedient to my parents, so I will do whatever my parents ask me to do." If his father told him, "Divorce your wife." "Okay, I'll do it." He says. That is wrong! If his wife was not at fault but was just not getting along with her parents-in-law, should he divorce her? He shouldn't! If he does, he has lost his moral righteousness. If he really divorced her, he actually put his parents to an unrighteous position. At that time, what would his neighbors and society say about his parents? This is like the ancients doing: "killing someone without teaching him first." Not teaching someone properly but killing him when he violated the law in ancient times is similar to divorcing your wife without properly teaching her first; both are very cruel.

Hence, we must continue to study; only then would we know that “being obedient” is to wholeheartedly follow parents’ instructions when they are right so that they will feel we are very sensible. When parents’ methods are inappropriate, we must act according to circumstances. Of course, we must not talk back right away. We can use circuitous tactics, waiting till they are more rational. At this time, we should “urge them to change” with a “pleasant expression and soft voice.” So, being filial and obedient to parents is absolutely not to do whatever they wish. If we do not continue to study and listen to the well-learned mentor’s lectures, we may possibly do things based on our own opinion and deviate from the truth. So, “practice” must be followed by “study” when we pursue wisdom. In other words, one’s understanding must correspond with his practice. Because the more thoroughly you practice, the more it will help you to understand. And the deeper you comprehend, the more effective your practice will be. Between practice and understanding, practice is the pivot; only by practicing will you experience an epiphany.

### ***The Trinity of Study***

Hence, for every phrase that we have learned, we must put into practice. My friends, if you don’t believe it, you can pick ten phrases in *Dizigui* and tell yourself that you are determined to practice them within half a year. When you have implemented these ten phrases within six months, you may suddenly realize that you have implemented some other phrases as well. Because, “practice” can uncover your perceptual power. When we learn “I will lift up curtains slowly without making any noise,” we will be able to think of others’ feelings even when we make a small movement. When you implement it thoroughly, this action will be internalized and become your intention. When you are always considerate of others, how many verses would you have implemented from practicing only this one verse in *Dizigui*? You may suddenly come to a realization of many verses. For example, “When people are busy, do not bother them with matters. When people’s minds are not at ease, do not bother them with words.” When we can genuinely implement this verse, our respectfulness, carefulness, and thoughtfulness will improve accordingly. So, we must be honest and conscientious. Do not be afraid and say, “So many of them, I can’t do it!” As long as you understand one sentence, you just need to practice that sentence right away. Only through practice can we be filled with Dharma joy\* (\*A joy that comes from inner heart instead of outside stimulus). So, our understanding must correspond with our practice. Let us look at the next phrase, “The way to study requires three things coming together: heart, eyes, and mouth are all indeed very important. Having started reading one book, I will not yearn for another. When the first book has not been finished, I will not start another. Set a loose schedule, but apply tight efforts. When my efforts reach a certain level, obstacles will dissolve. When I have a question, jot it down right away, so I can ask someone for its true meaning.”

“The way to study requires three things coming together: heart, eyes, and mouth are all indeed very important.” This phrase is very important! We must be very focused when we study the classics. Only with focus can we gain benefits. That is why we were very prudent when we gave the first lesson to students. We would first ask them to sit upright and place their book properly before they started to read the classic. When he reads with a respectful mind from the very beginning, he will never change this attitude for life after he has developed this habit. Had he sat crookedly and drifted his eyes in the first class, it would then be very difficult for him to obtain genuine benefits.

## **Water Vs. Rock**

We told the students how *Dizigui* came to be written. We said to them, “This book was compiled based on Confucius teachings. A scholar named Li Yuxiu, Qing Dynasty, had put considerable effort into sorting out the contents from the aspects of life. So, this book was indeed not easy to accomplish! In addition to the help of these ancient people, Teacher Yang has handwritten it so neatly and beautifully. If we don’t seriously learn it, we will forsake these elders. Besides, these books have to be transported from a faraway place before it can reach our hands, we must cherish them dearly!” Once, a child’s book was knocked down by another child. This child quickly gave it a gentle pat as soon as he picked it up. This is to allow “the first good notion to dominate one’s thinking.” Had you told them that this book is free when you gave it to them and threw it over to them, would children have respected the book? Impossible! So, we must always guide and lead children by example.

When they have sat up straight and were respectful of the book, we then told them, “Wisdom and knowledge must be continuously accumulated from day-to-day learning.” An idiom goes, “Water drops can penetrate a rock.” Is a rock harder or water? A rock is! But, why can water pierce a rock even though the rock is so hard? Why? Because the water kept dripping drop by drop, when it reached a myriad of drops or even more, it could go through the rock. This is “to conquer the strong with the tender.” This is similar to our pursuit of wisdom and knowledge; we must learn every word and every sentence conscientiously, then our wisdom will eventually have the power like water drops that penetrate a rock. We told the students, “Your finger is the finger of penetrating rock with water drops.” Every single drop of water has gotten me closer to penetrating the rock; my wisdom is recovered bit by bit through my finger pointing at each word to remember and comprehend them. So, we teach students to read the classics with their eyes fixed on the book, their finger pointing at the book, their mouth reading out, and their mind staying attentive. They must use their mind, eyes, mouth, and a finger all together.

## **One Step At a Time**

Next: “Having started reading one book, I will not yearn for another. When the first book has not been finished, I will not start another.” There is a major taboo in seeking wisdom, which is reading miscellaneously. But, people nowadays are greedy for more; it seems to them that more is better. That is not necessarily true because too much information will lead one to confusion. There is a sentence in “Records on Learning” in *The Book of Rites*: “When teachers teach in a miscellaneous manner and students study in disorder, then the students will be led to confusion and not know what to practice.” If we ask students to learn a lot at one time but not consider whether he reads hastily without thinking, he will definitely not learn well in the end,, even feeling he wants to give up. Many students today learn three or four talents at the same time, what is the consequence in the end? They get tired of learning. So, in learning the classics, pursuance of wisdom, and even just acquisition of worldly skills, one must be focused and not study miscellaneously.

Teacher Yang has practiced calligraphy for forty-one years. When she taught students the “Eight Principles of Writing in ‘Yong’ 永 (forever),” she required them to write the first stroke, a dot, thousands of times before they were allowed to write the next stroke. Do calligraphers nowadays instruct in the same way? Many people in the calligraphy world say, “Three months learning, we guarantee you to win an award.” Should you go? We have to calm down! What state of mind is he using to learn art? Eager for quick success and instant benefits! Calligraphy is a method for self-cultivation, it is a practice for the mind. Having children learn with a profit-

oriented attitude in the beginning, you are leading them to a path that is opposite to art. So, it is important, we must give children the correct guidance! In art, when one can write the first stroke properly and beautifully, his patience and perseverance will be formed during the process. He can then establish a solid foundation in every basic skill. Once a person's foundation is good he will not be defeated when he seeks for further development. If his foundation is weak, the faster he develops, the more dangerous he will be.

In the process of learning calligraphy, Teacher Yang has understood that every character has its structure and how to make it look very neat. Due to this attitude, when dealing with matters, she will adopt this kind of observation and skill to arrange things so that they will not get disordered. When writing calligraphy, how will one's concentration be? His concentration will be achieved to a meditative level. When one achieved the meditative concentration, he can then tackle things and interpersonal relations orderly. So, the ultimate goal of studying arts is to improve one's moral cultivation. So, Confucius said, "One should set aspirations on Dao, uphold virtues, comply with benevolence, and enjoy learning in arts." "Enjoying learning in arts" is also not departed from cultivating virtues and nurturing one's heart-nature. When Teacher Yang learned other arts such as Chinese painting, seal carving, due to her high sensitivity to art through calligraphy, she learned much faster than other people. Even learning computer skills, she learned very fast too. This is because her concentration and endurance have developed into perseverance. She would not go to sleep if she had not understood what she was learning. So, her computer literacy has improved rapidly. We young people who follow by her side only appear relatively inferior to her. Having such an elder to drive us, we must be focused on our learning.

### ***Finish One Book Before Starting Another***

Next: Having started reading one book, I will not yearn for another. Learning arts and studying classics should also apply this principle. We should finish reading one book before we read another. In the Song Dynasty, Zhao Pu (922-992) told Emperor Taizu\* (\*The first emperor of the Song Dynasty), "I helped you to conquer the world with half of *The Analects*." So, do you need to read a lot of books? The most important is to be able to grasp the essence and conscientiously implement them. Later, Zhao Pu said, "Now I only need to use the other half of *The Analects* to help you rule the nation." So in learning, it is a taboo to be greedy for more and seek for quick results. When you are too aggressive in learning, your mind will be restless. This does not correspond with the nature of learning. Mr. Zeng Guofan\* also mentioned, (\*a statesman and military general of the Qing Dynasty.) "We must have books in the heart but must not have many books on the desk." After attending this class and knowing that Chinese culture is excellent, you must not take out all *The Four Books* and *The Five Classics* from your bookcase and resolve to read them all in this month. If you do so, you will be very exhausted. We should first grasp the guiding principle. Which book should we learn first? *Dizigui*. (Audience reply.) "When the first book has not finished, I will not start another."

Many people who heard this said, "Does that mean my child does not need to memorize other classics in the future and only needs to recite *Dizigui* by heart? That is not what I meant. *Dizigui* is not meant for your child to memorize but must be used as a continuous reminder so that his foundation can be firmly established. If he is studying other classics, such as *The Classic of Filial Piety* and *The Analects*, he can continue to read them, but he must use books like *Dizigui* in moral and life teachings to repeatedly remind himself every day. Reading classics is to train one's concentration, while *Dizigui* helps guide his speech and behavior to observe due decorum. When one can observe due decorum, he will then coincide tacitly with the wondrous Dao.

## ***Loose Schedule, Tight Efforts***

Next: “Set a loose schedule, but apply tight efforts. When my efforts reach a certain level, obstacles will dissolve.” So, we should plan our study but not arrange the schedule too full so that we feel stressed out. “Set a loose schedule, but apply tight efforts.” We must always urge ourselves to work harder! What if we doze off while studying? *The Three Character Classic* states, “Sun Jing tied his hair on the beam, Su Qin stabbed his thighs with an awl.” These were the methods used by the ancient people. Sun Jing tied his hair to a beam of the ceiling, what would happen when he dozed off? His hair would be pulled and the pain would be so intense that his desire to sleep would disappear. Another scholar held a sharp object, what did he do to his thighs at once when he felt drowsy? ...please do not teach your child and tell him that it was taught by Teacher Tsai.

The ancient people had such determination! However, we should not let children hurt their bodies, we can teach them to wash their faces with cold water when they nod off to refresh themselves. Or, you can let them put a Confucius portrait on their desks, when they are about to fall asleep, they will feel embarrassed and continue to study. The methods vary from person to person. If you already have a good reading atmosphere in your family, members of the family can urge and remind each other. Whoever gets up first in the morning can quickly wake up the rest of the family. Many of our teachers play the tape of reading *Dizigui* as alarm to wake them up. “Set a loose schedule, but apply tight efforts. When my efforts reach a certain level, obstacles will dissolve.” When our practice corresponds with our understanding, things that may be difficult at first can be easily solved, because we need not to be afraid of lacking good methods when we have wisdom.

## ***Ask the Right People***

Next: When I have a question, jot it down right away, so I can ask someone for its true meaning. In pursuing wisdom, we must learn how to ask questions. But, we must ask the right person who is someone with expertise in this area. As the saying goes, “Some people heard of Dao earlier while others did so later. Some people specialize in one profession while others excel in other professions.” Can you ask me how to cook? If you did, you have asked the wrong person! But you can ask me how to cook noodles. Why? Because when I was in Haikou alone, it is called “a solitary bachelor.” Living alone, I had to sweep and mop the floor, wash the clothes, cook, and do everything all by myself. In the process of doing the chores, to whom do I have a sudden feeling of gratitude? “Mothers are so great!” Due to my hectic schedule every day, I had to be very efficient. I could only cook noodles. Every time, I would boil a pot of water, cut some vegetables, and cook them all together. Within twenty to thirty minutes, I could complete a bowl of noodles. Then I would put some tahini sauce on it. It made me very content. As the saying goes, “One who is content will always be happy.” I learned to cook noodles at that time. But, later I worked with many friends and we helped each other, so I stopped cooking noodles.

Back to the subject: we must ask our questions to the right person. Many friends would often ask those who would agree with them. Is there such a tendency? Obviously, we cannot let go of our own opinion because we always ask those who have strong attachment and think, “See, I should not be wrong.” As the proverb goes, “A good medicine for curing illness is usually bitter; and frank advice for self conduct is never pleasant to the ear.” Often, we are afraid to ask those who will speak straight to the point. Yet, those people can really benefit us. So, “When I have a question, jot it down right away, so I can ask someone for its true meaning.” As long as you are willing to learn, these virtuous and knowledgeable people will

surely tell you without hesitation. When your doubts are getting less and less, it is as if the dark clouds have dispersed, and your wisdom will be uncovered and lit up. So, we must “ask someone for its true meaning.” Let us look at the next verse and recite it together once, “I will keep my room neat, the wall clean, the desk tidy, and the pen and inkwell straight. If the ink stick is ground unevenly, it indicates that my mind is not upright. If I do not write neatly with respect, it shows that my mind has fallen ill. Books should be set in a fixed place. I will return them to their original place. Though there may be something urgent, I will still place the books properly. If the book is damaged, I will repair it immediately. If it is not sages’ teachings, I will discard the book and not even look at it, because it will cloud my intellect and corrupt my mind and aspirations. I should neither be harsh nor give up on myself, for the state of saints and sages can gradually be attained.”

The last sentence is super important! When you read the last sentence, you must hold your head up and chest out. “I should neither be harsh nor give up on myself, for the state of saints and sages can gradually be attained.” The most important thing in this stanza is that we have to manage a conducive studying environment by ourselves. You must not let the place you study be a mess. Can your mind be steady when you sit down in a disorderly place? It cannot. “I will keep my room neat, the wall clean,” so we will feel very pure and comfortable once we walk in. “The desk tidy, and the pen and inkwell straight.” It is true that people’s minds will be affected by the external environment. When the environment is clean, our minds will be pure as well. “The desk tidy, and the pen and inkwell straight.” All things must be put in fixed places. When you need to use something, your mind will then not be cluttered, taking a long time to find it.

### ***Ink Stick***

Next: If the ink stick is ground unevenly, it indicates that my mind is not upright. Actually, any of our actions will affect our inner state of mind. For instance, when we “stand up with an upright stance,” will we let our minds wildly wander under this condition? Not so likely. If one stands leaning to one side like this, how will others think in regard to his state of mind? Other people will feel his mind is fluctuating and wonder what deviated thoughts would arise from his mind. So, is there any difference with the different posture to grind the ink stick? It is different! Even your state of mind will be different. So, our posture must be upright and not crooked when we do everything because it will affect our state of mind. If one sits and stands improperly, his mind will become increasingly slack and arrogant. We must first request ourselves to stand and sit upright. And when we grind the ink stick, we must also sit upright. So, “If the ink stick is ground unevenly, it indicates that my mind is not upright.

If I do not write neatly with respect, it shows that my mind has fallen ill.” When we are writing, we should write with respect! If, every time, we write with a scattered mind, our learning will decline little by little since the learning state is completely determined by one’s mind. “If I do not write neatly with respect, it shows that my mind has fallen ill.” Many children today write with their notebooks tilted on one side. This is very strange, with notebook tilted, they can still write! Surprisingly, this is not the minority of them. In the future, they will always tilt their notebooks on one side to write. What may happen to their eyes? They may become cross eyed after a while. Hence, we must give them timely guidance by telling them to write with the book placed straight and the pen held upright.

Next: Books should be set in a fixed place. After reading, I will return them to their original place. This is “returning the thing to its original place after it was moved.” After I have finished reading a book, I will put it back to its original place, so it will enable me to find it



swiftly next time when I need it. We once visited Teacher Li Bingnan's study room. There are a lot of books in his study room, and each book is neatly arranged.

Next: Though there may be something urgent, I will still place the books properly. If the book is damaged, I will repair it immediately. After we have put it back, it is convenient for us to take it anytime. We also have to cherish books. "If the book is damaged, I will repair it immediately." In ancient times, books could not easily be obtained, so people particularly treasured them. They would repair any damage immediately. Today's printing is very advanced, but we should not disrespect and not cherish them just because of this progress. This is not right either. We can make some book covers so that the books will not get dirty. Or, we can make bookcases to protect the books and allow them to be used for a long time. These are all ways of cherishing books.

Next: If it is not sages' teachings, I will discard the book and not even look at it, because it will cloud my intellect and corrupt my mind and aspirations. We must not read books that are not of the saints and sages. We have mentioned, "We would rather not read any books all year round than get close to the villains for one day." This "villain" does not only refer to people. What else is it also referring to? Books. (\*It especially refers to the gibberish and misleading content on the internet nowadays.) Why would we rather not read any books than befriending the villains? It is like a cup of clear water that has been dripped with a drop of ink. How long does it take for the ink to spread into the entire water? Probably less than a second. But, how long do you need to clear out this drop of ink? It may take ten or a hundred times longer or even more to clear it, and it will not be easy to eliminate it. That is why guarding ourselves against pollution is extremely vital. We must guard ourselves as well as children against bad influences. We must have the ability to judge what books we should never read. The safest way is to read the classics that reveal the truth and have been attested for thousands of years. As for watching television or surfing the internet, we must keep a close eye on it. We must not let them be exposed to some contaminated content related to killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying. We must guard well against them.

### ***Do Not Be Harsh Nor Give Up On Yourself***

"I should neither be harsh nor give up on myself, for the state of saints and sages can gradually be attained." We have to give ourselves expectations, often encouraging ourselves. We must be confident in ourselves because "Primordially, people have a pure, good nature." As long as we are diligent and unremitting, we can certainly resonate with the state of saints and sages. Of course, the key lies in one's confidence. We must have confidence in ourselves. Who else should we have faith in? Having faith in the saints and sages. Who else? Having faith in our teachers. We must also have faith in our own children and all our relatives and friends. Because, everyone possesses a pure, good inherent nature. *The Analects* states, "A virtuous person will not be left alone, as like-minded people will come to learn with him." "All within the Four Seas are siblings." Lastly, shouldering responsibilities is the starting point for personal growth. So, besides learning by ourselves, we must teach others as well!

Dear friends, starting from our own self-cultivation, we can further contribute to our families and communities by teaching children once a week. Is this difficult to achieve? Not difficult. There are already many reference materials available. Just do our best in accordance with the conditions! It won't be too complicated. If there are three children coming, we teach three; and if there are five, we will teach five of them. Some parents are willing to learn with their children, we can take the opportunity to communicate some concepts of family education with them. Through communication, they will think it is good for everyone to learn together, as

they can mutually observe and set good examples for each other. We can then get these parents together and discuss with them for one class every week. Through persistent and long-term learning, they will improve and you will also make progress. Many things, we should let nature take its course. No need to act hastily!

Lastly, when we are learning the saints' and sages' teachings, we must understand why we learn from saints and sages. As *The Great Learning* states, "The Way of great learning is to reveal one's bright virtues, enabling one to love and help others live anew, and to achieve one's ultimate goodness." Thus, life is about self-awakening, awakening others, and achieving the complete perfection in awakening and cultivation. "To reveal one's bright virtues" is to make one's intrinsic nature manifested. When one reveals his bright virtues, he will then have wisdom. With wisdom, he can naturally harmonize a family, govern a country, and bring peace to the world. So, he can love and help others live anew. This means that he can love, care, and help others live anew. He can help himself and others "renew for one day, live anew every day, and let there be daily renovation." What do we renew and renovate? Our thinking, perspectives, and virtues. When we keep improving ourselves to help others to the extent of extreme, devoting ourselves wholeheartedly until we draw our last breath, we can then achieve our ultimate goodness.

Let's expect and wish each other the best with this phrase of Mencius' teaching, "What makes virtuous gentlemen different from ordinary people is their intentions." The difference between a virtuous man and an ordinary person lies in their intentions, because "Virtuous gentlemen are always mindful of upholding benevolence and etiquette." A benevolent person always loves others, while a polite person always respects others. "He who loves others will always be loved, and he who respects others will always be respected." Therefore, when we always imprint benevolence, etiquette, and saints' and sages' teachings in our minds, our virtues will definitely keep improving. Is it painful to learn to be saints and sages? Not at all! Because there will be more people who love and respect you. When we can continue to use this intention to face the people around us, I believe that our family, working environment, and even our society will be increasingly harmonious and united. We will stop here today. Thank you everyone.