

One Should Not Talk About Others' Shortcomings Nor Brag About One's Own Strengths

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(Clearwisdom.net) There is a saying that goes: "Nobody is perfect." Everyone has shortcomings. If you always focus on others' shortcomings and go all over the place telling people, then you will harm others. This is not how a gentleman should conduct himself.

Wen Zhengming, a talented intellectual from southern China, was the most famous painter and calligraphist in the mid Ming Dynasty. He had a natural disposition for not wanting to hear other people's flaws. If someone tried to tell him another person's flaws, he would cleverly avoid the subject to not let the person carry on the conversation. He was like that all his life.

Ma Yuan, a famous general in the Eastern Han Dynasty, also cautioned his nephew, "I hope that when you hear other people's flaws, you take it as hearing your parents' names. Your ear can hear it, but your mouth cannot utter it." (Note: According to Chinese tradition, [out of respect] children are not supposed to directly say their parents' names.)

As for one's own strength or merits, we should not show off our capabilities and quietly wait until the timing is right, and we should have a modest attitude.

Lao Zi once said to Confucius: "I have heard that a cleaver merchant will carefully hide his wealth and appear to own nothing at all. A man

with abundant virtue looks very dumb. Get rid of your conceitedness and excess desires. Get rid of your complacent and confident look, and your self-indulged mind. None of these is good for you."

The Doctrine of the Mean quotes words from *The Book of Song*: "Why does a beautiful dress decorated with elegant embroidery have a thin cloth garment for the exterior? It's exactly because the elegant embroidery was too prominent." This is used to explain that the Dao of a man is one of not showing off his capabilities and quietly waiting until the timing is right. Though his outer appearance may look unremarkable, as time goes by it will illuminate. If the inner content is shallow, even if the outer appearance is attractive, it will quickly diminish as the day goes by.

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