

A Mother Instilled Good Discipline, Sons Became Great Scholars

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Cheng's mother, Madam Ho, was the wife of a high-ranking government official. She was also the mother of two renowned scholars, Cheng Mingdao and Cheng Yichuan, in the Song Dynasty. She took care of her in-laws with strong love and respect. She instilled good discipline in her family. Moreover, she was a person of humble disposition and great refinement.

She treated her servants with kindness. If her children reprimanded the servants, she would definitely caution them, "Although there's a difference between the poor and the rich, we are all human beings." She was always gentle and forgiving to servants who made mistakes and tried her best not to hurt them. But when it came to a mistake made by her children, she would directly point it out if it was a minor one; and if it was a serious mistake, she would ask her husband to step in to punish them and request that they correct the mistake. She once said, "The reason for a child to disgrace his family is because the mother concealed the child's faults from the father and the father failed to rectify the child's mistake."

Mrs. Cheng had six boys but only two survived. She treasured them dearly; nevertheless, when her children were only a few years old, they stumbled and fell. Their family members were worried that they were frightened so they hurried to grab them. Yet, Mrs. Cheng reprimanded the children, "If you had walked nicely, would you have stumbled and fallen?" She meant to instill in her children a good mindset so they would hold themselves to strict standards and not blame others when encountering a problem.

When they ate, Mrs. Cheng often asked the two brothers to sit beside her. If the maids prepared luxurious dishes to serve the little masters, she would immediately stop them, "If you always fulfill their desires when they are young, what is going to happen when they grow up?" If her children argued and fought with others, even if they were right, she would not take their sides. Mrs. Cheng said, "What worries me is their not being able to deal with any frustration, rather than their not being able speak out for justice." Because of this upbringing, ever since they were little, the two Mr. Chengs were not at all picky about their food or clothing, and even less so would they verbally abuse others. Cheng Mingdao and Cheng Yichuan grew up to be great scholars of their generation.