

Respecting A Teacher As A Father

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"A teacher is one who lectures on principles, teaches skills, and dispels confusion." This is the explanation given by Han Yu of the Tang Dynasty. One's life is given by his or her parents. How to live one's life and how to conduct oneself mostly depends on teachers. In Chinese, "teacher" (Shi) and "father" (Fu) are combined into the phrase "master" (Shi Fu). Since ancient times, there has been a saying that goes "He who teaches me for a day, is my father for life." That is to say, one should treat one's teacher with respect and humility.

In traditional Chinese culture, respect for teachers was emphasized. Divine plaques were set up in a traditional family, which included heaven, earth, king, ancestors and teachers. This also shows how much respect people directed toward teachers.

The following story is taken from Zizhi Tongjian, an archive of history.

Wei Zhao was an accomplished scholar in the Eastern Han Dynasty. When he was young, Wei admired Guo Tai and requested to serve Guo by cleaning Guo's rooms and yard. Guo agreed.

One day, Guo was not feeling well. He ordered Wei to cook some porridge. When it was done, Wei served the porridge to Guo. Guo yelled at him, "When cooking for an elderly person, you didn't show enough respect. I have thus lost my appetite completely." Guo threw the bowl on the ground.

Wei went back to cook again and tried to served Guo again. However, he was scolded again. This happened three times. Wei never changed his attitude or showed even the slightest displeasure.

Guo then said, "Before, I knew you only on the surface. Now, I know your heart!"

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