

Traditional Chinese Culture: Being an Upright, Honest, and Trustworthy Person

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(Clearwisdom.net) Liang Guozhi was a man who lived during the Qing Dynasty, under Emperor Qianlong. He was kind, honest, and upright. He was also extremely intelligent and had enjoyed studying since he was a child. When he was only 17 years old, he won first place in the civil service examination at the provincial level. At the age of 24, he won first place in the Imperial civil service examination held at the Imperial court. After he became a government official he did not forget the elderly people in his hometown. He often used his salary to do charitable things for his fellow villagers. No matter where his post was, he always considered the welfare of the common people and did things to help the common people. As a result he was praised highly by them.

Liang Guozhi not only had broad and deep knowledge in many subjects; he also had a high moral standard. He excelled at calligraphy and painting. Many people were eager to collect his calligraphy works or paintings, and when they obtained them they treated them as treasures.

Under Liang Guozhi's influence, his son became interested in calligraphy and painting as well and asked his father to teach him how to paint. One day his son carried some painting brushes over and asked his father for lessons again. By mistake, the son had spilled some ink all over his face. Liang Guozhi laughed when he saw his son. He helped his son wipe the ink off from his face and said to his son sincerely, "One must learn how to be a good person before studying painting. One will never become an outstanding painter or calligrapher if he does not have

moral integrity." His son looked confused and asked his father, "Painting is just painting. What does it have to do with being a good person?" Liang Guozhi said, "A real painter paints with his heart, not his brush. If you are an honest and upright gentleman, your painting will be filled with an upright spirit. Then, when people look at it, they can see that the painting is filled with life and intelligence."

His son blinked his eyes in confusion. He did not really understand what his father had just said. Liang Guozhi told the story of Qin Kuai, the vicious and traitorous Prime Minister who had framed the patriotic military general Yue Fei of the Song Dynasty (1127 - 1279 A.D.) He said, "Qin Kuai actually was a very talented person and was very good at calligraphy. But he goes down in history as an infamous figure because of his treasonous acts. After he died, people cursed him as soon as they heard his name. Nobody was willing to collect his calligraphy work. People thought that keeping his calligraphy work would bring disaster to them. People either burned his works or threw his works in the latrine pit. Now there are very few pieces of his calligraphy work left. People despise his calligraphy work because they despise him."

His son nodded his head and looked as if he had finally understood his father. Liang Guozhi continued, "Being honest is the first step to becoming a good person. Only a person who does not lie and is honest can become an open and upright person."

His son always remembered his father's guidance. The son led his life in an honest and trustworthy manner, and became a respected and renowned painter in his own right.

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