

Moral Education in Ancient China: Kong Rong Offering Pears (Illustration)

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(Clearwisdom.net) There is a story recorded in the *Three-Character Primer* entitled, "Four-year-old Kong Rong offering pears." This is a textbook for children, said to have been compiled by Wang Yinglin in the Southern Song Dynasty. The story tells about the kind and generous nature of Kong Rong, who was born in the last years of the Eastern Han Dynasty. When he was only four years old, he already understood the principle of giving precedence to his elders out of courtesy.



Kong Rong Offering Pears

It was said that one day, someone sent a basket of pears to Kong Rong's

family. All of his elder brothers picked big pears. Only Kong Rong selected a small one. When others asked him why he chose a small one, he answered, "My brothers are older than me, and I'm the youngest, so, I should not vie with them for the pears."

This story tells us that younger brothers or sisters should understand proper etiquette and modestly yield to each other. This is a common sense of morality that both boys and girls should learn in childhood.

The ancient Chinese people paid strong attention to general morality, which was taken as the basic content in children's education and blended into all aspects of their daily lives and studies.

The moral requirement for the young to respect their elders was aimed at both boys and girls. For instance, in the *Primer for Girls*, it was written, "Be silent when parents scold; request lessons from elder brothers and their wives." This taught that a daughter must respect her parents. When parents criticize or scold, one should not argue back but quietly listen and think over where one did not do well. A younger sister should also respect her elder brothers and sisters-in-law and frequently ask for their advice.

CATEGORY: Traditional Culture