

An Ancient Story about Teaching the Young: Why Zengzi Cooked the Pig

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(Clearwisdom.net) This is a well-known ancient story about teaching children.

Zengzi was a student of Confucius. One day, as Zengzi's wife was leaving to go shopping, her youngest son kept crying because he wanted to go with her. So she comforted him saying, "Just wait at home. After I come back, I will kill a pig and cook the pork for you."

When she came back, she found Zengzi preparing to slaughter a pig. She hurriedly stopped him: "I said that just to comfort him." Zengzi said, "You cannot lie to a child. Since they are young and have no social experience, they follow what their parents tell them. If you lied to him today, you would actually be teaching him to lie to others like that. If a mother lies to her child, the child won't listen to her. Is this a good way to teach children?" Thus, Zengzi killed the pig and cooked the pork.

(Note: in ancient times, slaughtering and cooking pigs only took place during the New Year and some other important dates, or on days when a prestigious person came to visit, etc.)

The story tells us that parents should not lie to children at any time. This is because, as children's most direct examples, everything the parents do will significantly influence their children. A child will follow what the parents do. Therefore, parents need to be very careful in front of their children. This story also showed that Zengzi fully realized that parents are teaching children with their actions, and children can be well educated only after their parents behave well.

According to *Su Shi Jia Yu* (an ancient book on how to educate children), "Confucius's children did not know about swearing at others, and Zengzi's children did not know about anger. This could only come about because the parents were good at teaching them." The way Zengzi taught his children was very meaningful and has been praised throughout history.

(The story came from *Han Fei Zi*.)

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